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PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Monday, May 31, 2004 ★ 48 pages | vol. 19 | no. 173

www.inq7.net

RP envoy to preside over Security Council

By Jerome Aning

THE PHILIPPINES starts its month-assigned term tomorrow as president of the UN Security Council, the world organization's most powerful body.

Ambassador Lauro Baja Jr., permanent representative to the United Nations, said the

Asians launch search for their own 'Idols'

SINGAPORE—Auspicious "reality TV" shows with a Western musical sound, steamy sexual liaisons and other gimmicks.

The natural 42 hours once seem to have it except the hugs

SAUDI commandos jump off a helicopter on roof this burning crisis in Al-Khobar

3 Filipinos killed in Saudi terror attack

By Blanche S. Rivera and Jerome Aning

THREE Filipinos, including a cook at a Japanese restaurant, died when suspected Islamic extremists took hostages at a residential compound of mostly Western expatriates in Al-Khobar, Saudi Arabia, on Saturday.

Three other Filipinos were wounded.

Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah said about 10 Saudis and foreigners were killed in the Al-Khobar attack.

But the Saudi newspaper Al-Riyadh, quoting security officials in its border edition, put the number of fatalities at 16, including seven Saudi security agents. An American man, a 10-year-old Egyptian boy caught in a crossfire and three Filipinos were among those confirmed killed. British citizens and Saudi guards were also reportedly among the dead.

Saudi authorities freed seven Americans, Europeans and other foreign hostages after a shootout ending the hostage-taking that had engulfed the Saudi oil-rich region for two days.

With reports of up to seven gunmen, it wasn't clear if some of the gunmen had been killed.

The Philippine Overseas Labor Office (Polo) in Al-Khobar identified the Filipino fatalities as Feliciano Dizon, Joselly Cantu and Mariano Colmenar.

Quoting a report from Polo as of 2 p.m. yesterday, Labor Undersecretary Manuel Imson said the three overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) died in Oasis Hotel Tower 1 in Al-Khobar, six of 20 OFWs were

GMA allies control canvass committee

Poe camp lambasts makeup of panel

By Carlos Conde, Cynthia D. Balana and Christine O. Avendaño

THEY CAN beat their breasts, cry to high heaven all they want—and, yes, even take to the streets or go to the media—but in the end, it is the numbers that will count and the supposition that doesn't have them.

On the eve of the opening today of a joint Congress session to canvass the votes for president and vice president, the Senate and the House of Representatives set up an administration majority canvassing committee to oversee the results of the May 10 presidential elections.

The composition immediately cried foul, signaling that his words will mark the opening canvass of the Batasan complex.

The tabulation of the election results will be based on the certificates of canvass (CoCs), kept in padlocked ballot boxes, which contain vote tallies from provinces, cities, districts and absentee voting stations.

Lawmakers said the canvass act of opening the ballot boxes could take up to three days and the actual canvassing of the votes could start only after that week or the next.

But Campaign spokespersons,

ALMOST THERE
Political giant-slayer Maria Grecia Cielo Padaca on her way to Quezon City to address a crowd of supporters, including Fr. Robert Reyes, the "runaway priest." "Padaca is set to be even more powerful," Page B7.)

Yellow boxes may hold evidence of fraud

By Cynthia D. Balana

THEY COME in pink, yellow, gold colors, are individually packed and locked and guarded every minute by ARMP troops.

Inside them lies the answer to the question of whether or not the May 10 elections were stacked to make sure of fraud.

They are the ballot boxes containing the election returns or tally of votes for national candidates counted in the more than 200,000 precincts around the country during the hotly contested polls.

Whether or not they will be opened at all by the 22-member joint committees in charge of officially canvassing the votes for president and vice president is still a question mark. (See related story on this page.)

Lawmakers backing opposition presidential candidate Fernando Poe Jr. said the ballot boxes should be opened to determine the actual election results, in case of disputes over the authenticity of the certificates of canvass (CoCs) to be submitted by the poll committee.

The CoCs provide a summary

Debate shifts to opening of election returns

By Christine O. Avendaño and Norman Bordadora

TO EXAMINE or not to examine election returns?

That is the question that will haunt the 22-member joint committee of Congress today as it begins canvassing the votes for the presidential and vice presidential candidates.

Opposition lawmakers said they would insist that the joint committee examine the election returns (ERs) should certain certificates of canvass (CoCs) show signs of tampering.

The ER is the tally of votes counted in each precinct, while the certificate of votes (COV) is the tally prepared by the city or municipal board of canvassers based on the ERs. The CoC is the summary of votes for national candidates cast in each constituency or district for the presidency.

Committee Sen. Aquilino Pimentel Jr. earlier said that the leadership of Representative Pilipinos of presidential candidate Fernando Poe Jr., the main rival of President Macapagal-Arroyo, would vote to use 10 to 15 CoCs covering provinces where it believes massive cheating happened.

Senate President Franklin Drilon said yesterday that under the canvassing rules approved by Congress on Friday, it would be the committee that would recommend whether there was a need to resort to the ERs.

The joint canvassing committee will then present the to Congress in joint session, which would make the final decision. At this stage, it will be a numbers game. The administration lawmakers are reported to have the edge over the objections of the opposition.

But Nonoy Makulinad, an administration election lawyer, said his group would object to the opposition's plan to push for the examination of members of CoCs during canvassing by Congress and to re-

Jollibee president named World Entrepreneur of the Year

JOLLIBEE Foods Corp. president Tony Tan Caktiong was named World Entrepreneur of the Year in an awards ceremony held Friday in Monte Carlo, Monaco. The distinction will best that to his company's logo was cited during the cities as the "Philippine restaurant symbol for happiness."

Tan Caktiong, named 39 other finalists from all over the world to win the award, established their years ago and built on the success of an Entrepreneur of the Year program that has served 18 years in more than 130 cities across 60 countries.

The program is administered by Ernst & Young, a global professional services organization based in the United States and one of the world's largest accounting firms. EOY was launched in the United Kingdom in 1986 to recognize entrepreneurs who had created and sustained successful, growing business ventures.

On March 25, Tan Caktiong received the San Miguel Corp. (SMC) award during a banquet in Manila. Paolo Borromeo Cardenas held at the Sofitel dos Pavilion Terrace. He was accompanied by his family and David Balangue, chair of Ernst, Young, Ortaez, Sibato & Co., the Philippine partner of Ernst & Young.

Balangue is also president of the SMC Foundation, official organizer of EOY Philippines.

This year's WEOY finalists came from Australia, the United States, Ghana, Singapore, Indonesia and the United Kingdom, among other countries. Collectively, their firms employ more than 375,000 people and report annual revenues of approximately $28,221 billion.

Tan Caktiong was picked by an international panel of nine judges who were all past participants in this or equivalent countries' EOY awards. They particularly noted Jollibee's "ability to find its own growth by rewarding profits." Tan Caktiong owns 45 per-

SAY "CHICKEN JOY." Tony Tan Caktiong, World Entrepreneur of the Year, with son Carl Brian, wife Grace and daughter Grace Caroline.

WEATHER FORECAST

Subpoena agri funds recipients–Chavez

By Armand N. Nocum

FORMER Solicitor General Frank Chavez will ask the Office of the Ombudsman to subpoena all the legislators and local government officials who received part of the more than P1 billion in agricultural funds meant for the purchase of fertilizer and other farm inputs which were allegedly diverted to the campaign kitty of President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Chavez, who has filed a plunder case against Ms Macapagal, said the 100 congressmen, 32 governors and 23 mayors who benefitted from the agri funds should explain where the money went, otherwise, they would be included in the plunder case.

Aside from Ms Macapagal, Chavez charged top officials of the Department of Budget and Management and the Department of Agriculture with plunder. The DA oversees the Countryside Agro-Industrial Development Initiative (CARDI) program for which the funds came from.

The multiyear group Pambansang Lakas ng Kilusang Mamalakaya also cleared recipients of the funds led by Congressman Jose de Venecia to count clients about the money, between P2 million and P5 million, they each received from the DA program.

In a statement, Pamalakaya urged De Venecia to explain his own involvement in the controversial multi-billion peso fund.

Chavez claimed the funds which were released in two tranches of P528 million and P291 million in February did not reach the farmers but ended up in the war chest of the President and her allies.

"I will apply for a subpoena to compel the congressmen, governors and mayors to explain [where the money went] or they too will be joint conspirators in the plunder case," said Chavez.

No fertilizer received

Several farmer organizations have denied receiving the fertilizer and other "farm inputs" which the fund recipients were supposed to purchase for them.

They are now collecting 10,000 affidavits from their regional and provincial officers to prove their point.

Chavez said he will include in the plunder charge election officials who may refuse to comply with the subpoena from the Ombudsman.

"If they refuse to cooperate, they will be made respondents in the plunder case for being part of the conspiracy and for suppressing evidence," he said in a telephone interview with the Inquirer.

Those whose names were included in the list of Agriculture Undersecretary Andrea Bolante but who did not receive any funds should also be told how this happened, Chavez said.

Rotary colleagues

Bolante, a classmate of then Sorsogon Rep. Florencio Abad and Tarlac Rep. Benigno "Noynoy" Aquino Jr.—have denied receiving any money or farm materials.

Bukidnon Rep. Miguel Zubiri and Surigao del Sur Rep. Prospero Pichay admitted receiving P5 million each, but said the money was still "yours."

In a statement, Pamalakaya chair Fernando Hicap lamented that there appears to be a "pay order" on the recipients of the funds, most of whom belong to the administration party, it was speaking out about their cuts in the funds.

National whitewash

"At this point, we can conclude that the Macapagal administration is about to do a national whitewash before this freshmen hears the case," Hicap said.

Hailing De Venecia's alleged efforts to probe the issue, Pamalakaya spokesperson Gene Albert Crespo asked de Venecia to "lead the inquiry in his own turf."

"Speaker De Venecia had said nothing about the national call of government funds since the issue came out last week. The Speaker must find time to address this latest scenario of corruption and plunder," Crespo said.

Among the recipients of the funds from Congress were Reps. Roque Ablan, Jacinto Paras, Enrique T. Garcia, Deles Gordon, Wilfredo Villacorta, Prospero Negrillo, Mario Bulaong, Federico Isagani, Roque S. Allan, Rufus Tajanlangit, Hernani Abaya, Eleuterio Guanzon, Jerry G. Salcedo, Manuel Zamora, Prospero Negrillo, Robert Jaworski, Augusto Syjuco, Apolonio L. Lozada Jr., Raul Gonzalez, Simeon Marbasco, Gerardo Espina and Rep. Erlinda Ortiz Reyes Jr.

Other recipients were Reps. Manuel Ortega, Jesse Cua, Enrique T. Garcia, Oscar Rodriguez, Jaime Jordan, Aniceto Lopez, Leonor Perpetua, Felix Alfelor Jr., Antonio C. Floirendo Jr., and Mayo Almario, Vicente Sandoval, Ramgolf Javier, Oscar Exon, Rizaza Pacumbaba, Orlando Fua Jr., Marcelino Libanan, Isidro Real Jr., Belisa Calidas, Angel Enclino, Teresita Aperocho, Narciso Monsod, Joseph Estrada and Arthur Defensor.

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Pinoy shines at West Point

By Alcuin Papa

ABOARD FLIPPER (Almost abroad).

Cadet Capt. Alexander Joseph Estrada graduated from the United States Military Academy at West Point this year as a bluetaker. His graduation's equivalent of a cum laude graduate.

Estrada earned a cumulative average of 90 percent in overall academic performance, a grade which he maintained for the last three years. He graduated 43rd in a class of 1,050 cadets and graduated top nine in Operational Research, a major subject at the academy.

He is also a member of the prestigious Kappa Phi Kappa honor society, an association of graduating students who belong to the top five percent of their class in selected commercial universities, including the West Point.

Estrada not only excelled in academics but also in leadership. He was assigned to the Regimental Staff Officers of the USMA Cadet Corps and was given the rank of Cadet Captain, a rare distinction attained by Filipino Neil Frederic. The last Filipino given that rank was cadet AFP Chief of Staff Gen. Efren Abu.

Former President Fidel V. Ramos is also an alumnus of West Point.

Estrada entered the Philippine Military Academy in 1999. The following year, he became president of his class, ranked second in academics and passed the West Point criteria. He was recommended to the USMA by his superiors at the PMA.

When he returns, the outstanding cadet will join the Philippine Army as a 2nd Lieutenant.

He is the son of Army Lt. Gen. Alexander Estrada, himself a graduate of the PMA, Class '70, and Josephine, a nurse. The Estrada had three Pinoy Rebol, but resides in Quezon City.

NPA makes AI roster of rights violators anew

By Alcuin Papa

THE MILITARY yesterday said the inclusion of the communist New People's Army by the international human rights group Amnesty International in its list of human rights violators was not surprising.

This is the second time the armed wing of the Communist Party of the Philippines has been cited in AI's annual report. In its 2003 report, AI labelled the NPA and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) as human rights violators.

The Maoist-oriented NPA has been waging a 35-year old insurgency in the country, the longest running in Asia.

"That report is not surprising and that is only the tip of the iceberg. The CPP-NPA-NDF has not been transparent (in reporting human rights abuses) and has even developed the art of deception," said military spokesperson Lt. Col. Daniel Lucero.

Usual suspects

The local chapter of the London-based international watchdog included the NPA in its list of human rights violators while pointing to the military and police as the usual suspects in human rights violations.

In its 2004 report, AI noted that the global war on terror had escalated human rights abuses in the country committed not only by the state but also by "non-state" perpetrators.

The NPA, AI said, committed human rights abuses when it claimed responsibility for the killing of former rebel chief Romulo Kintanar and when it reportedly abducted and killed last year two civilians in Mindanao suspected of aiding the military.

In contrast to the NPA, Lucero said the Armed Forces of Philippines has "opened its records" on complaints of human rights abuses, adding that complaints of such abuses committed by soldiers have declined over the years.

Steady decrease

"There has been a steady decrease in the number of complaints of alleged AFP human rights abuses, mostly as a result of the crackdown on the Abu Sayyaf Group. This represents a serious effort to further improve the human rights record of the military," Lucero said.

According to Lucero, complaints of human rights abuses against soldiers reached a high of 263 in 2001. These went down to 78 in 2002 and further to 55 last year. So far this year, there were only 17 complaints received, Lucero said.

Lucero attributed the reduction in the number of complaints to the continuing programs instituted by the AFP to increase awareness of human rights among soldiers and to monitor human rights complaints.

Educational program

In 1995, Lucero said the military institutionalized human rights courses in educational programs of the AFP as well as that of the Citizens' Armed Force Geographical Units (Cafgu).

He also said the AFP instituted an information drive to make soldiers more aware of human rights and the right to information and transparency.

Lucero also said the military recently established a Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law desk which is connected with the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Civil Military Operations (J7).

WISTFUL
A schoolboy looks askance over a pile of school supplies in a Divisoria, Manila, store one week before the opening of classes on June 8 and with the price of everything nearly sky-high.
MANDY HORNILLOSA

Transfer of Cotabato City canvass to Manila opposed

By Edwin O. Fernandez and Nash Maulana
PDI Mindanao Bureau

COTABATO CITY—Supporters of reelectionist Mayor Muslimin Sema and other Lakas-CMD candidates here have opposed the transfer of the canvassing of local votes from a military camp here to Manila.

Claiming that Sema had won the election, his followers said they fear the poll results would be reversed.

"Why canvassed in Manila when the canvassing at a military camp was smooth and secure," they said.

But the planned transport of election paraphernalia to Manila did not push through after the city election officer, lawyer Lentang Bedol, failed to show up at the headquarters of the Army's 6th Infantry Division where the ballot boxes are stored.

Comelec approval

The Comelec had earlier approved the transfer of the canvass from the city legislative building to the well-secured military camp.

The National Citizens' Movement for Free Elections has also opposed the transfer, claiming the canvass at the military camp was secure and well-represented by both sides.

The mayoral post is being hotly contested with both candidates claiming they won.

Sema said he won on the basis of copies of election returns furnished by the poll body to the dominant political party.

On the other hand, his rival Estrellita Neng Juliano of the Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino also claimed victory on the basis of the same election returns furnished by the Comelec to the KNP.

Three election officials had been named to chair the Cotabato City board of canvassers but all were subsequently relieved by Comelec Chair Benjamin Abalos.

The most recent one, Bedol, was appointed last Sunday but was relieved on May 29 without completing his job.

Biased

First to be named board chair was lawyer Yogie Martirizar who was relieved after Juliano sought her relief for alleged bias in favor of Sema.

Abalos later appointed lawyer Antonio Surmieda, election officer of Marinduque, along with two other lawyers from the same province.

But Surmieda and his colleagues hurriedly left, claiming they had received threats. The post was assumed by Bedol whom Juliano also opposed, questioning Bedol's credibility as an election official.

On Saturday, Bedol had just completed the canvassing of votes and was about to issue a verdict on contested election returns when the order relieving him came.

Protest

"All election returns had been canvassed and the votes were to be tallied in the statement of votes when the order came," said Lito Coloso, an aide of Sema's.

Bedol confirmed to a local radio station that he had been relieved from his post.

A source in Juliano's camp said the KNP suspected Bedol of being biased against her, thus the request for the transfer of the canvassing process to Manila.

Sema's supporters have gathered at the city plaza to protest the transfer. They came from Maguindanao towns and arrived in the city on board hauler trucks. "They showed their support for the mayor," said Coloso.

SAUDI: special forces take positions outside the Khobi housing compound. —AP

3 Filipinos killed in Saudi terror attack

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northeast of Riyadh.

Lebrasin was a cook working for the Saudi Japanese consortium in the Oasis residential compound, while Dizon and Ereap were employed at Bawazeer Siemco Saudi Arabia Ltd.

The Oasis compound is an upscale expatriate neighborhood that includes amenities such as shops, restaurants, playgrounds and fitness centers in addition to a hotel and leisurely activities such as a grassy golf course and an ice-skating rink, according to the compound's website.

Of the three Filipinos wounded in the attack, Alberto Corsolino suffered only minor injuries. He was out of the hospital yesterday, but Marvin Perino remained in the intensive care unit of the Saud Hospital after undergoing an operation for wounds on his face.

Ismael Baraza, an airconditioning company technician who was shot in the foot, was still confined at the Awwa Hospital but he had been declared out of danger by doctors, Imson said.

Commando

The rebels carried about 25 hours after it began Saturday morning. Gunmen in military-style dress opened fire and exchanged shots with Saudi security forces at two oil industry compounds housing offices and employee apartments. They fled up the street, taking hostages in a high-rise in Oasis.

One of the targeted oil industry compounds contains offices and apartments for the Arab Petroleum Investment Corp. and the other—the Petrochem Center building—houses various international firms.

Dillera at the Petrochem Center includes a joint venture among Royal Dutch/Shell Group, Total SA and Ismail Services, Ismail Holdings of Russia, and China Petroleum & Chemical Corp.

Saudi security forces earlier stormed the walled housing compound and surrounded the attackers on the sixth floor of a building. A security official said one terrorist during the night to storm the building where the hostages were being held was abandoned after bodily traps were discovered.

But just after sunrise, three security forces helicopters and several armored off-road vehicles Moderate gunfire, heard sporadically overnight, rang out again. Within a few hours, the standoff was over.

Security officials had said 43 to 60 people were held hostage, mostly Westerners.

The attack was the latest in a wave of terror in Saudi Arabia over the past year, leaving more 63 people dead and hundreds injured.

Halliburton

The violence has been blamed on previously unpublished al-Qaeda, a statement signed by the "Al-Qaida Organization in the Arabian Peninsula" said the assault targeted the facilities "affiliated with the US occupation company Halliburton" and praised the attackers as "an honorable example of Muslim youth in the Arabian Peninsula."

Oasis residents and an employee said the militants asked questions when they arrived that indicated they were trying to separate Muslims from non-Muslims. Islamic militants have been criticized in the Arab world for previous attacks in which Muslim and others have been killed.

One of the five Lebanese hostages, who were released, said the removed in her apartment with her 4-year-old son for five hours after a brief encounter with two of the gunmen, whom she described as clean-shaven and wearing military uniforms.

Oyoia Nasrallah told AP by telephone that the gunmen asked her where the "infidels" and foreigners were, and whether she was Shaikh or Christian.

"I replied: 'I am Lebanese and there are no foreigners here.'" She said she gunmen told her to "Go current or kitten, and cover up and go back to your country."

Trapped receptionist

Julie Stenhouse, spokesperson of the Embassy of Foreign Affairs, said the two Filipinos who were among the hostages trapped on the upper floors of the Oasis Tower communicated with the Philippine Embassy in Riyadh until 3 a.m. (Manila time), before their cellular phones lost power.

Shamaiza Gonzaga, Philippine ambassador to Saudi Arabia, said DFA that he was still awaiting word on what happened to the two hostages, whom he identified as Hisman Lumita and Camilo Dizon.

Dizon, a receptionist at the hotel and a native of Bipolog City, locked himself and other guests on the fourth floor, Gonzaga account of.

"He told me that when the attack started, he directed the guests to stay in their rooms and then he soldered all the keys, headed down his computer and brought with him upstairs about 20 guests, mostly Westerners," Gonzaga said.

At the time Dizon is ran out of battery power, he entered 8:30 a.m., local time, he told the ambassador that he was still in room 405.

Gonzaga said other staff at the embassy had already sought appointments with the employees of the injured and dead Filipinos so as to it that financial and other forms of assistance would be given the victims.

The Overseas Workers Welfare Administration will give the families of the dead OFWs P300,000 in insurance benefits and P50,000 in burial aid.

There are about 948,000 Filipinos in Saudi Arabia, according to the Department of Foreign Affairs. *With a report from AP*

RP envoy to preside over SC

Front page, A14

Philippine mission was looking forward to assuming the council's discussions during the month-long presidency.

In a statement from New York, Baja said: "I'm not now on the political radar screen of UN members. He will project and promote the image of the Philippines as a strong responsible and principled nation in matters ... with charity and tolerance."

In Manila envoy, Baja will preside over the Security Council's formal and informal meetings and consultations except on June 22, when Foreign Secretary Jaiba Albert takes the seat for the open debate on the Philippine-sponsored topic, "Participation of Civil Society in Post-Conflict Peace-Building."

Included in his "preliminary forecast" for the month, Baja said, were issues on Iraq, the Middle East, Haiti, Cyprus, Liberia, Sudan, Congo, Ivory Coast, Guinea Bissau, the International Criminal Tribunals on Yugoslavia and Rwanda, and the status of civilians in armed conflict.

The Philippines is the first of five newly elected countries to hold the council's rotating presidency in succession. Pakistan, an old member and **president for the month of May in 2003, shortly** before the start of its two-year participation as a non-permanent member, the Philippines will again assume the presidency of the Security Council.

Under the UN Charter, the council is primarily responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security. It is the most powerful UN organ because it is the only one whose decisions are enforceable and binding on the member-countries.

Baja earlier described the Philippines' role in the Security Council's during the past five months as "assertive, cooperative and substantive."

He recounted that the Manila mission was "in the forefront during negotiations for the revitalization of the counter-terrorism committee and sanctions committee on al-Qaida and Taliban." He said the Philippines helped draft, and then co-sponsored, the resolution against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

"Our suggestions on regional and multilateral approaches to conflict resolutions ... have been supported," he said. "We were [also] active when the issue of children in armed conflict was discussed."

Baja said the Philippines was the only new Security Council member that was chair of a sanctions committee (on Somalia), considered the "most difficult" of committees. The country is the chair of three other sanctions committees (on Iraq, Liberia and the Democratic Republic of Congo).

This is the fourth time the Philippines will be serving in the Security Council. A charter member of the United Nations, the country was an active elected member of the Security Council in 1957, 1963 and 1980. As such, it held the presidency at least once during each of those previous terms.

In October last year, the Philippines was elected a non-permanent member of the Security Council by the General Assembly. The Philippines assumed its seat in the council in January.

Drugs, chemicals enter RP with ease, says solon

By Nelson E Flores

CHEMICALS used in the manufacture of amphetamine-type stimulants like shabu (methamphetamine hydrochloride) continue to enter the country with ease.

Cebu Rep. Antonio Cuenco told reporters he himself witnessed how easy it was for importers relying on shabu precursor chemicals despite the "tight" watch of the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) on the country's major seaports and airports. He said the situation appeared to have been going on for quite some time.

Cuenco, who chairs the congressional oversight committee on dangerous drugs, talked to reporters after meeting with Interior and Local Government Secretary and Dangerous Drugs Board officer in charge Joey Lina, PDEA director Jesus Versoza and executive director Jose Calida and Bureau of Customs deputy commissioner Jose Faustino Gallogo on Friday at the DILG main office.

Cuenco said he was with the Philippine National Police when they intercepted a "commercial shipment" of toluene, a chemical used in the manufacture of shabu, which was brought in last month through the Port of Cebu without undergoing scrutiny by the Bureau of Customs and the PDEA.

Misdeclared volume

The toluene shipment which was imported by Lucos Bureau Industries and E and D Enterprises from Australia was about to be released on its consignees, when it was apprehended, Cuenco said.

He said that based on the importation documents, the volume of toluene in the shipment should not have exceeded 12 percent but closer inspection showed the volume ranged from 50 to 75 percent, a clear case of misdeclaration.

Cuenco said the shipment was cleared through by the BOC and the PDEA compliance unit without a thorough inspection, adding that "the PDEA practically relied on the face value of the importation papers."

As a consequence of the incident, Cuenco said he would ask Congress to strengthen the 2000 law and the DDB must be empowered to inspect chemicals entering the country to prevent the smuggling of precursors that could be used in shabu manufacture.

Toluene is also used in the manufacture of paint, adhesives like rugby and paper products.

Calida, for his part, said true under the provisions of Republic Act No. 9165 (the Comprehensive Dangerous Drugs Act of 2002), the importations of toluene is regulated. He said that for a shipment of more than 50 percent mixture volume, a DDB permit is required.

Gallogo declined to comment on the matter.

Expansion, transshipment

Calida also said international drug traffickers have expanded their operations in the Philippines and made the country a transshipment point for their contraband.

In a report he presented at a recent forum against illegal drugs in Bangkok, Thailand, Calida said the "Philippines reportedly has become one of the major exporters for ecstasy."

He attributed this to the increase in production of illegal drugs in Asia, particularly in Myanmar, China and India, compounded by the ease with which syndicated crime groups can travel throughout the region with globalization.

He said these developments "have resulted in increased pressures [on drug traffickers] to look for new markets."

He said shabu was once being smuggled in to the country through four major avenues—the seaports, the international airports, the mail and parcel services, and the vast Philippine coastline, specifically in the provinces of Batanes, Cagayan, Ilocos Sur, Pangasinan, Zambales, Aurora, Quezon, Oriental and Occidental Mindoro, Palawan, Masbate, Sorsogon, South Cotabato, Sulu and Tawi-Tawi.

Boracay suspect: No plans to leave

BORACAY ISLAND, Aklan—A German national charged with the killing of four people in this island resort said he had no plans of leaving the country even before acting Justice Secretary Ma. Merceditas Gutierrez issued a hold departure order against him on Friday.

Dan Pelzel, 37, denied any involvement in the gruesome murders and challenged investigators of the Philippine National Police to present evidence linking him to the crime.

"I wish for the PNP to show the world the so-called 'bloodstained footprints' as claimed by [prosecution witness] Jun Villaver," Pelzel said in a statement released to the bureau by his lawyer Edgar Calabia.

He also demanded that investigators release results of the DNA tests taken from the crime scene.

Pelzel have filed a criminal complaint against Pelzel, Filipino worker Chito Catalogo and three unidentified suspects in the killings of German doctor Kristin Beckmeier, Swabian-born Hong Kong art gallery owner Manfred Schuster, Hong Kong-based architect John Gaspar Schuster and Pennsylvania-born Filipino nurse Gemma Mendoza.

The victims were found dead with multiple stab wounds on May 3 in Hermit Beach's Diniwid Mountain here.

Investigators said blood-caked footprints matching those of Pelzel were found in a bathroom on the second floor Avatar II Boutique Jr., BW Marjan Bureau.

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THE DAILY GOSPEL

Monday, May 31, 2004
Feast of the Visitation

1st Reading: Zep 3:14-18
Gospel: Lk 1:39-56

Mary does not see for a man in the Hills of Judah. She entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leapt in her womb. Elizabeth was filled with holy spirit, and giving a loud cry, said, "You are most blessed among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb! How is it that the mother of my Lord comes to me? The moment you greeting sounded in my ears, the baby within me suddenly leapt for joy. Blessed are you who believed that the Lord's word would come true!" And Mary said:

"My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, my spirit exults in God my savior!
"He has looked upon his servant in her lowliness, and people for ever will call me blessed.
"The Mighty One has done great things for me, Holy is his Name!
"From age to age his mercy extends to those who live in his presence.
"He has acted with power and done wonders, and scattered the proud with their plans.
"He has put down the mighty from their thrones and lifted up those who are downtrodden.
"He has filled the hungry with good things but sent the rich away empty.
"He held out his hand to Israel, his servant, for he remembered his mercy
even as he promised our fathers, Abraham and his descendants forever."

Mary remained with Elizabeth about three months and then returned home.

Commentary:

Does this sound familiar?
My heart exults in the Lord;
my strength is exalted in my God.
The bows of the mighty are broken,
but the weak are girded with strength.
He sent forth his word to heal us,
and did not leave us to perish.
The Lord makes poor and makes rich;
he brings low, he also exalts . . . (1S 2:1-10)

It is the Canticle of Hannah, mother of Samuel, and it is the source on which Mary's Magnificat is based. Mary is shaped, you might say, by the text of the Old Testament.

But she is also a figure looking to the future. She is an image of the new community, the Church. That is a community where the topsy-turvy logic of the Gospel is intended to hold sway. Up there is the lord, the weak is the strong, the presence is the least, the poor are the rich etc. the banner is the highest . . . "God has put down the mighty from their thrones and exalted the lowly." *But what we look at the Church—at ourselves—sadly, we see that we live mostly by straight forward logic: power and privilege, palaces, budgets and titles of honor.*

Mary, the greatest revolutionary figure, still has many revolutions to accomplish.

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SUERTRES 8 9 6 (for exact order)

SUPERLOTTO 6/49 3 19 18 25 32 46

METRO
Editor Abelardo S. Utanday

Millions owed to traffic enforcers up for release

By Margaux C. Ortiz and Leila Salaverria

JUST in time for the opening of classes.

Millions of pesos worth of long overdue incentives to traffic enforcers and volunteers would be released this week, Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) Chair Bayani Fernando announced yesterday.

"This is a reward for our traffic enforcers," Fernando said in his weekly program on radio dzBB.

He was referring to the 20 percent share of enforcers from fines paid by traffic violators, which had not been released since November last year.

Minimizing graft

The incentives is meant to encourage enforcers to apprehend violators without rampons and minimize bribery and corruption.

MMDA Traffic Operations Center Director Angelito Vergel de Dios said 600 of the 2,000 MMDA traffic enforcers were authorized to issue traffic violation receipts.

He estimated that those could receive from P5,000 to P10,000 in incentives per month depending on their performance.

Accountability incentives could be paid out in checks as early as tomorrow, Vergel de Dios said.

DPOG Bernardo Ramonarejo, of the Manila traffic district, said that on the average, a traffic policeman makes a minimum of 10 citations every day.

Lamentation

Ramonarejo lamented that the MMDA has not released their incentives for the last nine months. He was expecting to collect P10,000 but said some of his 209 colleagues in Manila were looking forward to getting P40,000.

The MMDA identified the five most common traffic violations of private vehicle drivers as: yellow lane violation, with a fine of P300; disregarding traffic signs, P1000; obstruction, P1000; and reserving, P500.

For bus drivers, these are: yellow lane violation, obstruction, illegal loading/unloading, P550; and open door violation, P350.

MMDA: Edsa in bad shape; to undergo ₱1.4-B rehab

By Margaux C. Ortiz

TRAFFIC flow on Edsa will greatly improve once a major rehabilitation project planned for the main artery is completed, the traffic chief of the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) said yesterday.

MMDA Traffic Operations Center Director Angelito Vergel de Dios said the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) already earmarked P1.4 billion for the Edsa Rehabilitation Project.

Funding will come from a loan from the Asian Development Bank, Vergel de Dios disclosed.

Vergel de Dios also said the rehabilitation would start in two months after the ADB had approved and released the fund.

He explained that traffic along the main thoroughfare could not be improved significantly because of the poor condition of many of its roads.

About 20 percent or 3.6 km of the 20.4-km Edsa needs to be re-carpeted.

Interviewed along those parts, like those near Boni Avenue and Shaw Boulevard in Mandaluyong, are already cracked or fragmented and are only overlaid with asphalt.

"Vehicles are forced to slow down when passing over these sections to avoid rattling or damaging their cars.

"Vergel de Dios said the DPWH initially wanted to give the entire Edsa a 2-inch overlay of asphalt.

"But MMDA Chair Bayani Fernando and some parts of Edsa could just undergo concrete re-blocking instead of overlaying the entire thoroughfare with asphalt," Vergel de Dios said.

Fernando, in a separate phone interview, said "Concrete re-blocking would be less expensive and we could devote some of the budget to other projects."

Vergel de Dios estimated that half of the P1.4 billion funding would be used for the overlay.

The remaining half would be used to repair or remove traffic lights and structures like pedestrian overpasses.

Part of the budget would also be devoted to installing "cat eyes" or luminous lane dividers and delineated signs.

Motor loading and unloading zones will also be put up.

Fernando had said that they banned loading and unloading zones previously set up in illegal lanes, Ayala and Cubao have significantly improved traffic flow in those areas.

Fernando said there is a proposal loading zones were adjusted according to the volume of buses at a given time.

The more buses lined up, the longer time allotted to them.

The yellow light over the timer signals the drivers to start loading and unloading passengers in the specified bus. After the usual 30 seconds, the light turns red, signaling drivers to drive on.

God sought to reform police

By Edson Tandoc Jr.

IT SEEMS that there are things that only God can change.

Add one of them would be the bad image of the police force.

This morning, the interior department will distribute copies of the New Testament to policemen at the Northern Police District as part of its 8th payWorks sa Pulis program.

District Director Marcelino Franco told the Inquirer yesterday that policemen also "have to be guided in their faith."

To change the image of the lawmen who are stereotyped as crooks, manipulating and corrupt, they need to be transformed through their faith, according to MPD Superintendent chief Crismin Taleon.

Taleon, who leads some of his men in occasional Bible study groups, said reform should start in the heart.

Policemen, he pointed out, should see their work as a "calling from God."

"Kailangan ding may nakat sa Diyos ang mga pulis [Policemen should hear God]," opens [illegible] deputy chief Cris Galvez, who attends the Bible study groups of Taleon, shared.

Faith, according to him, would improve the kind of service policemen give to the communities.

Taleon said some of their colleagues laugh at their Bible studies but that had not discouraged him from pursuing their study groups.

Taleon's loyalty stems from "born again" pastors in their districts, inspired by mostly policemen from his department.

He stressed that attendance was voluntary.

Before the elections, they hold study groups on Fridays either in their office at the headquarters or in the pastors' church.

However, the weekly sessions stopped when the policemen got busy.

Asked about the policeman's image as a bad guy, Taleon said, "Nothing is impossible with God. But it does not happen overnight."

Interior Secretary Joey Lina is expected to attend today's program at the MPD headquarters.

Trip to store costs student, 21, his life

DASMARIÑAS, Cavite — Bernardo never thought that a late night trip to the neighborhood store would cost his life.

Bernardo, 21, a student, was walking to the convenience store near the gate of Jordan Park Homes in Barangay Commonwealth when two bullets struck him in the body.

The bullets came from the gun of one of two security guards: Ricardo Ejarde, 49, and Eugenio Perez, 28, who tried to murder on appearance with a shoot. Both guards were Jordan Park Homes security officers.

Ejarde was seriously wounded in the gun play that took place at the subdivision guardhouse at about 10:30 p.m.

The wounded watchman was reported in guarded condition at the Mariwasa Oriental Hospital.

Tina Santos

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Dr. A. L. Santos; 51

DR. ANGELITO LEANDRO Santos, a writer and professor of English and comparative literature at the University of the Philippines, died yesterday at the Makati Medical Center of multiple organ failure. He was 51.

He is survived by his wife Elsie, daughter Maude (veteran columnist of the Inquirer) and her husband Dan Bellen, son Jay and his wife Jen; sisters Fay, Daisy and Mona; brothers Teodoro, Tony and Frank, and other relatives.

His body lies at the Loyola Memorial Chapels on Shaw Blvd., Pasahagte City. Cremation will be on Thursday at Loyola Guadalupe following the 1 p.m. Mass at Loyola Science. Burial will be on Saturday in Mayantoc, Tarlac, his hometown.

The WORLD

Cleo Lorette S. Garcia

2 Sunni Muslims vying to become Iraq president

BAGHDAD—Iraqi leaders grappled on Sunday over who should succeed Saddam Hussein as president when the US occupation ends in a month.

Two men from Saddam's Iraq dominant Tyrrel Muslim minority are vying for the largely ceremonial job: Former Foreign Minister Adnan Pachachi and Ghazi Yawar, an engineer previously based in Saudi Arabia.

Many of the 25-member Iraqi Governing Council meeting on Sunday were frosty and one senior Iraqi politician, But US administrator Paul Bremer and IIS envoy Lakhdar Brahimi were pushing his case for Pachachi.

The US-led coalition occupying Iraq toppled Saddam more than a year ago. In the interim government that to take over on June 30, the prime minister's job will be the most powerful one.

The US-appointed Governing Council caught the United Nations off guard on Friday when it announced the choice for prime minister of Iyad Allawi, a secular Shiite Muslim who had strong links with the CIA during his three decades in exile.

Brahimi and Bremer, who will stay on-side for the interim government on June 30, are struggling to strike a balance among Iraq's fractious religious and ethnic communities.

Pachachi, 81, was foreign minister of Iraq in the 1960s, before Saddam came to power. A scion of a powerful Sunni dynasty he has spent much of the time since in exile in Abu Dhabi.

Yawar, who is in his 40s, is also a Sunni tribal leader. As an engineer and businessman he was in exile in Saudi Arabia.

Senior members of the Governing Council told Reuters after talks on Saturday that the Cabinet lineup was all but set but there was a deadlock over the presidency.

Others said unpredictable were still open on other jobs.

Washington asked the United Nations and Brahimi to help form a government that will lead Iraq to its first free elections in the next year under a plan that the United Nations has submitted to the UN Security Council for international endorsement.

With the top post of prime minister in the hands of Allawi, from the Iraq approved 60-percent Shiite majority, several politicians said the watchdog Baathist minority in the north would be compromised by failing to secure the presidency by gaining two key ministries, defense and foreign affairs.

The Baath, who suffered prosecution and violence under Saddam's fascist regime, effectively broke free of Baghdad under 20 years after the Gulf War of 1991.

But Washington is said to allow in the region, notably Turkey which fears by handing Kurdish population, are now keen to keep the Kurds inside a new federal Iraq.

On Saturday, senior Governing Council member Ahmad Chalabi said the names of key ministers had been agreed with Bremer and Brahimi and that the main argument was over the presidency.

"The Governing Council, Bremer and Lakhdar Brahimi agreed on the list," he told Reuters. "It is not 100-percent certain that the nominees will accept it but it is pretty sure they will."

Parliament Thomas Ghalibi, who briefly was Iraq's vice-oil minister after Saddam's fall, was named as oil minister, and Chalabi, a Shiite scholar of Islamic who was a civil rights party and has fallen out of favor with Washington.

Chalabi said Abdelqar Zebari, now foreign minister, would be former minister while another Kurd, Barham Salih, would take over the Foreign Ministry, while Abdul Khaliq, a Shiite, was nominated as finance minister, Chalabi said.

Another senior Iraqi politician, not on the Council, said he also believed the list had been drawn up and was all but ready after heavy arguments between Allawi and the Governing Council.

Zebari, who is not on the 25-member Council, told Reuters on Saturday: "There have been no nominations for ministers. Talks are continuing. Efforts are focused on the presidency."Reuters

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Synopsis of Annual Statement
As of December 31, 2003

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Bonds	P124,000,000.00
Treasury Bills	300,000.00
Stocks	18,497,487.00
Real Estate	5,215,000.00
Other Loans	100,000.00
Security Fund	12,000.00
Other Investments	15,162,000.00
Cash on Hand and in Banks	4,645,487.00
Premiums Receivable	4,645,487.00
Reinsurers Due from Ceding Companies	12,000,000.00
Reinsurance Recoverable on Losses	1,000,000.00
Salvage Recoverable	1,715,715.00
Accrued Investment Income	1,000,000.00
Electronic Data Processing Machines	715,187.25
Total Admitted Assets	P231,777,312.00

LIABILITIES

Losses & Claims Payable	P14,100,000.00
Loss Adjustment Expenses Payable	20,000.00
Reserve for Unearned Premiums	35,000,187.00
Premiums Due to Reinsurers	12,715,000.00
Premium Reserve Withheld for Reinsurers	1,010,000.00
Loss Reserve Withheld for Reinsurers	12,700.00
Other Reinsurance Accounts Payable	47,187.00
Commissions Payable	10,100,700.00
Taxes Payable	3,197,187.00
Catastrophic Loss Reserve	100,715.00
Accounts Payable	100,187.00
Unearned Bond Discount	1,000,000.00
Other Liabilities	1,415,187.00
Total Liabilities	P115,798,447.00

STOCKHOLDERS' EQUITY

Capital Stock Paid Up	P50,000,000.00
Special Surplus Funds - Fluctuation Reserve Bonds	1,617,647.00
Retained Earnings	64,361,218.00
Total Stockholders' Equity	P115,978,865.00
Total Liabilities and Stockholders' Equity	P231,777,312.00

(This synopsis, prepared from the 2003 Annual Statement, approved by the Insurance Commissioner, is published pursuant to Section 120 of the Insurance Code.)

German leader to join D-Day anniversary fete

BERLIN — When Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder joins other world leaders next month to remember the D-Day landings, it will mark a symbolic turning point in Germany's tainted relationship with its past and its place in modern Europe.

Never before has a German leader been invited to the commemoration of the bravely fought Allied landings in occupied northern France 60 years ago that heralded the beginning of the end of World War II.

Former Chancellor Helmut Kohl was famously left off the guest list 10 years ago, leaving him to claim it would have been inappropriate to go anyway.

A decade on Schroeder, the first German leader of the post-war generation, says his invitation, a recognition of Germany's reemergence as a fully paid-up member of the Western democracy.

"Of course, I was very moved by the invitation," he told the New York Times in a recent interview.

He said that while he never knew his father, who died in the war, "I will know who started the war and that invalid friends to urge myself to accept the invitation."

The public reaction to Germans has been predictably mixed with relief.

"It doesn't bring things to an end but it draws line by the past," said one student at a pro-government think tank who did not want to be named.

"It shows what we have and for decades, [but the old enemies have become partners."

Also symbolic is that the anniversary comes just weeks after the European Union, jointly co-founded by France and Germany, expanded to 25 members, placing Berlin not only economically but also geographically at the heart of the new Europe. AFP

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SPORTS

WHAT'S INSIDE

CORTEZA rakes careful aim at the one ball on the way to winning Bustamante's bid for a breakthrough win in the San Miguel Asian 9-ball Tour.

SMB ASIAN 9-BALL

Corteza foils Bustamante

By Nina Barin

YOUTHFUL Lee Van Corteza fashioned a thrilling 13-11 down-the-wire victory over heavy favorite Francisco "Django" Bustamante to top the Manila leg of the San Miguel Asian 9-ball Tour yesterday at the Octagon Hall of the Robinson's Galleria.

The 23-year-old consistent SeaSheet Asian Games gold medalist cleared the table in the 22nd rack off Bustamante's dry break and staged a last-out in the 24th to win the hill-hill (plus) match viewed by an appreciative crowd.

It was the first down-Hall title for Corteza who seized the top prize of $10,000 and qualified for the World Pool Championships in Taipei next month as he vaulted the top 10 list after five legs of the Asian trek.

"Buka ko hindi na ako matatalo ng Bustamante ng Django ng 13-9. Pero nasa ilalim ng pressure sa akin, lapas pumapasok na lahat ng

CONTINUED A-12

Excitement beats up for Inquirer Badminton Expo

THE INQUIRER/MBG Industries Badminton Expo opens the Shipyards Hall 2 of the Old Shipyard in Mandaluyong this weekend (June 5-6) for the Inquirer Badminton Expo 2004, which organizers believe to be the biggest ever trade fair for the booming sport.

Expo visitors will be treated to a wealth and of promotional activities by the big and small manufacturers of the badminton industry, highlighted by the Badminton Adventure Relay prepared by the organizing Inquirer Badminton and Expo trade fairers.

The inaugural event has Challenge, a three-event contest among the best 12 teams (six men recuperated for the weekend by the four Expo workers) with exciting prizes in store for the top finishers.

Smart Red is co-presenting the IB Expo together with adidas and the Yellow Brand of sports outfits.

Also scheduled on Saturday is a Yonex badminton clinic by Olympian Weena Lao and celebrity appearances sponsored by Nike's marketers.

Capping the first day is the free Miguel Expo Party with a special performance by Zsa Zsa.

On June 5, Bryan Cogan of The Asics will conduct a special seminar.

Bjorn Bjornsen, Allison Peters, Genaro Prince, FMJC, etc., Ethan Ngo and Chairman are the major sponsors of the two-day fair. Textiles and Shoes are providing the main for the competitions.

Participating in the Expo are 60 companies distributing equipment, footwear, apparel, accessories and activity floorings, courts facilities, publications, websites and health products.

Confirmed exhibitors include Abdulla Trading Sign, Allied International, Alto Trading, L.G. Best Court, Badminton Center, Badminton Store Industrial, Badminton Philippines, Badminton Plus!, Badminton.com, Bambino's Sporting Goods, Bambino Philippines, Bambino Plus!, Bambino.com, Bambino's Sporting Goods, Bambino Philippines, Bambino Plus!, Bambino.com, Clement Mont's Badminton, Clem Sports, Clem's Badminton Center, Colombo Philippines, Dragon Inc., Euro Goods, Fruitlee Alley Badminton Courts, Fruitlee Yi Shirts, Fortune Guaranteed Insurance Corp., GMA Club Masters, Global World Class Products, Hanes, Hotel's Plus, Hipness Master Sports Corp., MCP Global Resources (MNL), Mondo Textiles, Olympic Badminton Center, Olympian Weena, pinoybadmintonstore.net, Divisoria Badminton Center, Pinoy Sports Center, Pinoy Goods, Sanaol Philippines, Prince, Pringle, Quick Step, Rainbow Flight, Sanyo, Shuttle's Best, Smash Plus Network Philippines, Smashville, South Sounds, Sparmay

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For inquiries, call Arog Arcanes, Rudel Sotelo or Chiqui Ong Ang at 6370888 loc. 2219 or 2214.

Sanford keys big Coke win

By Jaime Navarro

MARK Sanford brushed aside an earlier spat with his coach to lead Coca-Cola to a runaway 116-87 victory over Shell Lite eight in the Gran Matador PBA Piston Conference at the Araneta Coliseum.

Sanford poured 26 of his 30 points in the final half after being benched by coach Chot Reyes for an ill-timed shot that paved the way for a halftime-ending blast by Tony Dela Cruz in the second quarter.

"The good thing about him (Mark) was he took it constructively and focused even more on the game," said Reyes.

With Ato Miguel Beer rolling Dan's Red Bull Barako, 110-105, for a re-throughs, the Tigers routinely secured a playoff with the Alaska Ace for the second quarterfinal berth on Wednesday.

The top-seeded Beermen finished the series at 10-4 while the Barakoyanmen stayed at 10-6.

The Tigers, for now, are on the Talk 'N Text Phone Pals all-defeated with 11-7 records, but Coke and Alaska swiped up with the better quotient.

The Phone Pals ended the elimination round with a 12-6 record.

SANFORD expects accumulated assists Shell import Jamaal Wilkes in the game last night.

SPORTSWATCH

Sison dominate Cebu adidas netfest

CEBU—(left) Mike Sison helped Accel-Logistics (9-7, 6-2, 4-3) overcome 7-9 strikes and Alexander Chua sealed Jayson Gunay (5-8, 6-3, 6-4) in the boys' 12-under division at the close of the adidas Tennis Challenge Series at the Talisay Country Club here. Sally Mae Mercader of Accel-Logistics also ended as 8-1, 6-2 finishing at Primary Mae Libre in the girls' 12-under division as the Cebu siblings dominated the adidas netfest organized by STMC supported by MBL and Wilson Gatorade and coordinated by the Phillips Sally Mae and Alexander Chua in the final night with Ronnie Gunay (who dominated Ronnie Dante, 6-1, 6-4) for the boys' 10-under crown. Ronaldo Lino also outplayed Ronnie Dante (6-2, 6-2) in the boys' 8-under final. Sister Mae came back to defeat Ronnie Dante (6-2, 5-7, 6-4) for the girls' 10-under title. Ronald Langcauon downed Ronnie Dante, 6-4, 6-4, for the boys' 14-under championship, and Jen Quiambao and Jessa Gonzales who topped Miss 12-under winners' finalists. Adidas executive Cindy Cruz adds awards to the finalists in the netfest.

Buenaventura back as gymnastics proxy

BAG. "Chuck" Buenaventura was unanimously re-elected president of the Gymnastics Association of the Philippines in conference held recently at the Bayanihan Hotel. Buenaventura succeeded Ben Steffi Ong during the 1992 Olympiad as GAP officers were hastings. Executive body, upon, set-out secretary general and another, respectively. The 13 new regional directors are Cecile Mercado Ramos (Region I), Clifford Gallop (Region II), Noel Rivera (Region III), Marilou Bagbagan and Rodolfo Urban (Region IV), Edna Rosales (Region V), Ray Castillo (Region VI), Edna Mabel (Region VII), Jimmy Ong (Region VIII), Ruben Tiamson (Region IX), Ben Tiamson (Region X), Jose Ramos (ARMM), Jenny Ong (CAR) and Santiago Yu for Metropolitan Capital Region.

Sportshouse serves up 2nd badminton tilt

THE SECOND Sportshouse Corporate and Celebrity Cup Invitational Badminton Tournament has been slated for June 12-13 with bigger prizes for the winners. The tournament is open to corporate teams, and the expanding Team Personality Events Corp. Events to be decided on the under-18 for men and ladies, 30-and-up for men and ladies, and mixed doubles. Last year's finalists Glen Tongco and Ben Chanco defeated Ronnie Magsaysay and Jaime Bautista in the men's singles. Deadline for entries is on June 9 at 5 p.m. Inquiries, call Ben or Team Personality at 709-9-04/09000. Log on to teampersonality@yahoo.com or visit the Sportshouse branch along Ayala Ave. Badminton Expo at SM Megamall or Author Jane Lazo 8.

UAAP renews partnership with ABS-CBN

THE UNIVERSITY Athletic Association of the Philippines (UAAP) and broadcast giant ABS-CBN are renewing their partnership for the league's 67th thoroughbred" tournament, Channel 2 execs. The league's most prominent, right the television network will air the league's 67th edition of its annual sports festival for the 15th straight year starting with the UAAP season opener next June. The relief that ever-a-contract day with this season's according to Jesse ABS-CBN's athletic stars the games were Diablo 23, will also broadcast the league's opening ceremonies and highlight matches on the 12 other sports that the league's 10 member schools will participate in during the season. The league's 67th season will open on June 26 at the lobby of the Greenhills' 2. The Time for Sports coordinator said have to catch volleyball and basketball games. Also scheduled for broadcast are Palaro Tobacco Pilipinas Cup athletic games, Asian Derby parking stickers, and Gerardo Limcaoco games that can be viewed on television by fans within the Ayala cable. The great coffee includes Ayala electronic gift certificates and Swedish watches. Prizes will be drawn on Aug. 30. For inquiries, call Gilda Velarde at Globe Phil. Inc. at 638-6888 loc. 302.

Foundation sets 'Fairway to Heaven' int'l

A CONCEPTUS Cancer to the United States will be on the golfer when the 10. Ritchie Fairfield Foundation (RAF) Golfer de Lot Invitational Golf Tournament Fairway to Heaven" on June 14 at the Riverside Golf Club in Pasig. Philippine Golf and Country Club in Canlubang, Laguna. The tournament will be in two rounds on the consecutive days—three and subsequent days of the Scandalous & Maritime Disaster (SMD) is now multi-eight year of providing palliative care to terminally ill patients. Patrons' folks will allow the foundation to provide comfort and dignity to more patients with incurable diseases. For more information, call 636-8326 or so. The awarding ceremony for the 12 sports the first participant who shoots a hole-in-one but will be raffled off if no one scores the one. Major sponsors are Greenhills Philippines Corp. and Northwest Airlines, Inc. For inquiries, call RAF at 2872-0000 ext. 4000-0000. Digital TV 0000-0 or e-mail sandra@mydigital.net.

Asi Taulava has two mothers?

BASKETBALL being a game of tricks, lower-growth suggest Chot's Tropang 'texkid's to beat experienced by regular the action of the Tanduay with the Talk 'N Text team in the PBA.

Some players seem so gifted they could appear to be in two places, up in the air and dunked out the hoop over, on the same time.

Some of the dribbling moves done by Michael Jordan, and obviously being propelled to sports by Kobe Bryant, could indeed border on the unexplicable.

Tanduay of Talk 'N Text, although a qualified superstar benchmark, caused both a stable to the final 1.21 at the Big Dome.

But Taulava had dazzled with a personal factor, after he was made to have accepted from two months.

Does Taulava have two mothers?

Look, the game Dick Bourgeois had written grab-quickly about a woman who had two carrots, to have.

But Taulava's story could even be a bigger masterpiece; that's if he succeeds in proving that his Filipino lineage is fact and not products of "cheat."

Unfortunately, Taulava's Filipino parentage, a major requirement for his stint as a regular locale in the PBA, is quite being questioned.

If, and all but been exactly fully swept under the carpet, so to say, until Makiyo dropped a bomb with a January press release on Wednesday telling that the MBL has found "Taulava to be of Filipino."

As would only be expected, the party of the morning-end, the Talk 'N Text team, raised to wash this—if to another comic situation.

Is Taulava in Filipino now in the PBA a product of truth or result of import machinery?

Taulava is the Filipino report, speaking a comic message sent by the US Department of Homeland Security to the MBL for an initial answer.

"Official records indicate subject's (Taulava and his mother's) permanent US residence. Records obtained by the US Department of Homeland Security indicate that Taulava was born Pauline Mamerto Taulava on July 15, 1980, in Vaetu, Tongatapu, Tonga. His father, Sitaleki Kilaenda, and mother, Maseo Kilaenda, were also natives of Tonga. US Immigration and Naturalization Service records showed his alien registration number is the US is 095-046-204.

"Asi's records in the US showed he was born March 2, 1975 (He father, Pauline, was born in Patagalla, Tonga."

For the record, Taulava is—game to his right to play in the PBA based on the parentage of his mother, Pauline Mamerto Mamerto, whom he claimed was born in Tonga.

To reconcile that a former investigation last year did come to the conclusion that Mrs. Pauline had failed her birth certificate to make it appear she was born of Filipino parentage in the Visayas.

Despite the glaring proofs presented by the former commissioner headed by Sen. Robert Barbers, both the PBA and the Bureau of Immigration, however, refused to put its foot down to curb the senseless race.

Talk 'N Text was able to secure a court injunction and Taulava has remained his colorful and flamboyant self on the local pro league.

And Taulava of the latest developments: "This has been going on for years, every time we've got a big game, rumor being overseas up. I've gotten used to it already."

That was a silly excuse.

But Taulava may no longer feel comfortable with reports that the MBL has requested the Tonga Embassy to assist unveiled true origins of his (sic) birth certificate together with that of his mother in Tonga.

Immigration lawyer Ray Abrasco, head of the team investigating the so-called fill-in-the-blanks birth certificate of Mrs. Pauline, the MBL has every right now to file an ouster complaint against Taulava and his naturalized backers.

We could hardly wait for the result of that communication by the MBL with the Tonga to be tested.

The Philippine government itself is in a bind, based on the latest twist on the Taulava case.

Do remember that it was during the start of the controversial Nani Perez as justice secretary when the Taulava citizenship papers were approved.

If the government, based on the erroneous decision of the Nani people, ends up in findings, while the Tonga documents bear the truth and show Taulava's mother was pure Tongan, the Philippines would be establishing a new world record.

Taulava has two names and we would all be left with the lone number of all documentary records in query.

GREENHILLS 3-MILER. Commissioner Salud and Gloria Diaz stare off from trophies after topping the race in Greenhills 3-Mile Classic held around the Greenhills Shopping Complex in San Juan. Mercy Manila Salud clocked 29:24 while Diaz registered a time of 35:52 in the eighty centennial foot race. Photo shows Jean Sell, Greenhills Running Club president Dr. Jerry Jarin, Aaron Chang, Proctor and Gamble Distributing Inc. Phils. president Jenny Cruz and race organizer Rudy Biscocho.

Pro-Taliban cleric killed in Karachi

SHAHZAD addressing an anti-US rally in Karachi in this Nov. 9, 2001 file photo.

KARACHI—A senior pro-Taliban cleric in Pakistan was gunned down on Sunday outside his mosque in the southern city of Karachi, and the death unleashed violent protests in which at least eight people were hurt.

Mufti Nizamuddin Shamzai, who had called for a "jihad," or holy war, against the United States after the invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq, was fatally wounded, police said. His son, another relative, a bodyguard and a driver were also hit.

A man was immediately clear who was behind the attack or whether it was a sectarian killing.

"As soon as we saw the car, we heard gun shots and we immediately ducked," the cleric's relative, Rafiuddin, told reporters. "I felt a strong pain in my leg. I had been shot and then I saw Mufti Nizamuddin Shamzai fell on the ground."

Provincial security adviser Shuaib Sheikh told Reuters that it had been known Shamzai's life was under threat and the government had provided him armed bodyguards.

"It was a targeted killing and according to our information about 10 to 12 people were involved," he said. "It is a continuation of recent acts of violence and terrorism."

The crackle of gunfire was heard after violent demonstrations broke out in several parts of Karachi. Small groups of Shamzai's followers came out on the streets, pelting vehicles with stones and burning tires.

A Reuters correspondent at the scene said thousands of people, many carrying batons, had gathered near Shamzai's Islamic school, located in a central commercial area, and had set fire to two banks, several shops and a petrol station.

"There is a lot of smoke in the air from the burning cars and building... plus it continued all around (our compound) vehicles, and people are really charged," he said.

"There is heavy shelling of tear gas and police fired gun shots in the air to disperse the crowd," another witness said.

A doctor at one hospital told Reuters that two protesters had been brought in with gunshot wounds and six policemen had been injured by stones.

Ishaaq Ziad, governor of Sindh province of which Karachi, a sprawling port city of 14 million people is the capital, supported the strike.

"I appeal to the people and to the organizers as well, we all equally share the grief, but cooperate with us and we will certainly catch the killers," Ziad said on Geo television.

Shamzai belonged to the hardline Deobandi school of Islamic thought, which has provided thousands of fighters to the Taliban in neighboring Afghanistan. Several Pakistani Islamic militant groups considered him their spiritual leader. Reuters

Israel missiles blow up Hamas leader

GAZA—Two missiles fired by an unidentified spy plane killed a high-profile Hamas militant commander on his motorcycle and two onlookers in Gaza City early on Sunday, Palestinian witnesses said.

Hamas sources identified the commander as Wael Nassar and said he and one of the other slain militants were involved in a May 11 ambush in which six Israeli soldiers were killed over a water dispute near the Gaza City.

Palestinian medics said seven civilians, including a woman and two children, were wounded in the missile strike near Gaza City's Zeitoun district, as Nassar's motorcycle was hurled and target of the rocket was destroyed.

An Israeli army spokesperson confirmed the missile strike, saying it had eliminated two senior militants responsible for planning suicide bombings and other attacks that had killed numerous Israeli soldiers and civilians.

Witnesses said Nassar and a Hamas military-wing comrade riding with him on his motorcycle were killed by the first missile. The second missile crashed close by moments later, killing another Hamas man in the street.

Hamas militants crowded into the mortuary that took in the three bodies, some of them bloodied and in pieces, and wept while others fired their rifles. Anxiously in the air, shouting Allahu Akbar ("God is Greatest") and vowing revenge.

"Did they hunt you down, my dear hero? I am afraid they did," said Nassar's mother, Marou, perched in his charred body.

Another Palestinian brought pieces of the militants' Reuters for mosque in a plastic bag.

In southern Gaza, Israeli armored bulldozers and a dozen army vehicles ringed camp and razed three houses, residents said.

The army often raids Rafah in operations to root out tunnels used by militants to smuggle in arms from nearby Egypt. Reuters

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4 GIs slain in Afghanistan

KABUL—Four US soldiers have been killed in actions in southeast Afghanistan, the US military said early Sunday.

"Four US service members are injured in the Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force Afghanistan were killed by actions today here in southern Afghanistan," US Central Command said in a statement.

The four were killed in two, Reuters reported, which is 190 km southwest of the Afghan capital Kabul.

"Names will not be released until notification of next of kin is complete," the statement said.

Mullah Omar denies were immediately available but there is no deadliest attack on US soldiers since the beginning of Operation Mountain Storm in early March.

The deaths bring to 127 the number of coalition soldiers, members, air forces members, intelligence agents killed in Afghanistan since the launch of US-led operations to topple the Taliban regime in late 2001, although most deaths have not been in combat. AFP

PHOTO taken May 28, 2004 shows people walking past the Archibald Fountain in Sydney's Hyde Park. As the worst drought in living memory continues, Australian households have done little to curb water usage, which is about 20 percent higher than the OECD average.

Australia water crisis looms

SYDNEY—Australians have been warned they have an environmental crisis unless they stop squandering scarce water resources in the world's most arid inhabited continent.

Restrictions have been little in south water usage despite the worst drought in living memory, with households in the drought-dominated country still using water at a rate 20 percent higher than the OECD average.

The problem is most acute in large cities, such as Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide, which account for well over two-thirds of Australia's 20 million population.

With reservoir levels below 50 percent in all of Australia's major cities except Brisbane, experts have warned something must be done.

Sydney, the nation's largest city has now focused how dam levels are continues to replenish, with experts saying the bulk of the country's population on the coastal fringes do not realize the extent of the problem.

In response, the Victoria state government has proposed hefty fines and even jail terms for individuals or companies that permanently flout water restrictions.

University of New England water policy research expert John Wilhelmus said drawing restrictions amounts of water from Australia's reservoirs would be a key to the solution, leaving them to rebuild like to store algal blooms and devastating fragile marine ecosystems.

"Ironically for outside supply and the problem is getting worse," Wilhelmus said, pointing out the natural flow of Australia's largest river system, the Murray-Darling, was now less than one-tenth of the flow of South America's Amazon.

A report by the government scientific body CSIRO this year said water shortages would intensify in the currently prolonged by-past. Interior Minister at the "wide brown land."

It warned by 2020 there will be reduced rainfall and around double the number of very hot summer days in some cities.

Proposed solutions in the public info fall into two categories, water engineering projects to dramatically increase water supply or initiatives to reduce demand and ensure water is used more efficiently.

Some of the schemes put forward by the engineering camp over the years have bordered on outlandish, including towing fresh-water icebergs from Antarctica and stimulating rainfall by creating artificial mountains in the desert or building a giant rehab or wind-powered water skyward. AFP

Watergate prosecutor Archibald Cox dies

COX in 1987 photo.

WASHINGTON—Archibald Cox, the special Watergate prosecutor whose firing by the White House ignited a political crisis that ended support for President Richard Nixon, has died at age 92, his family said on Sunday.

Cox died on Saturday at his home in Brookeville, Maine, his wife, Phyllis, said.

In what came to be called as "the Saturday Night Massacre" on October 1973 ordered the removal of Cox, who had been seeking access to White House audiotapes involving discussions about Watergate.

Attorney General Elliot Richardson and Deputy Attorney General William Ruckelshaus resigned rather than carry out the order. Cox was finally fired by Solicitor General Robert Bork, whose nomination for the US Supreme Court more than a decade later was rejected by the Senate.

Cox's senior assistant spokesperson, even among Nixon's fellow Republicans. The president was later forced to relinquish the tapes and resigned in August 1974 after the beginning of impeachment proceedings tied to the 1972 break-in at Democratic headquarters at the Watergate building in Washington and subsequent cover-up.

Cox, a former Harvard law professor, had been appointed as the first Watergate special prosecutor in May 1973 by Richardson, his former student. Cox also served as solicitor general under President John F. Kennedy.

Cox's death came the same day as that of Antonin Scalia, another prominent Watergate investigator. Scalia died in Washington, aged 79, his daughter Ann Claire said. Reuters

Russian tycoon faces jail, loss of empire

MOSCOW—Just months after he was hauled into jail, Russia's richest man Mikhail Khodorkovsky faces a lengthy prison sentence and the loss of his oil empire, widely seen as punishment for his defiance of the Kremlin.

Accused of defrauding the state of a billion dollars, the ex-boss of the biggest Russian oil company Yukos appeared in court briefly in Moscow on Friday to have his trial adjourned until August.

With Yukos warning of bankruptcy because of demands by Russia's tax ministry that it pay $3.5 billion in back taxes, observers expect a speedy conclusion to one of the top political dramas of President Vladimir Putin's rule.

The 41-year-old billionaire tycoon, who could face 10 years or more in prison and confiscation of assets, denies the charges but has no illusions about his fate, one of his lawyers said. AFP

"It is realistic. He understood that values he didn't learn the country before his arrest. Now that he is sitting in jail he understands that he could receive a lengthy sentence," attorney Anton Drel said.

Khodorkovsky was detained on Oct. 25, when armed police stormed his private jet during a stopover in Siberia, and flown to Moscow to be jailed pending his trial on charges of massive fraud and tax evasion.

Any sale of the oil giant or its oligarchs who amassed their billions during controversial privatizations in the tumultuous post-Soviet years in the early 1990s would be pursued on similar charges, according to observers.

But Khodorkovsky was targeted because he had spent part of his fortune financing opposition parties ahead of last December's parliamentary elections—as a lesson to Russia's super-rich tycoons to keep out of politics, they say.

Powerful elements in the Kremlin from the security services are also believed to be determined for the state to wrest control of the strategic energy sector by expropriating Russia's most successful oil company. AFP

RUNNER-UP O'Hara (left) and the Philippines' Ey (right) spray Jones with champagne.

Jones holds sway again

SUBIC, Zambales—Christian Jones unveiled past pole-sitter John O'Hara in a tight contest in the eighth lap and held the lead the rest of the way to keep his slim position after two legs of the Asian Formula 3 Super 1916 series at the Subic International Raceway.

The Istobel Australian hiked his score total to a perfect 80 points, while Jones's the biggest unwounded of the day.

Down by the 16-year-old Brent School eighth-grader landed a three-second penalty in the morning and finished third to crash under the Asian F3 history books as the youngest podium finisher ever.

Ey, who has dominated the pro-rookie division this year, took the penalty after passing Dody Wijaya while the yellow flag was up as a Marshal's save-of-the-afternoon.

There no such were added to Ey's time as penalty.

Officials issued the yellow flag—which is hoisted when there is an obstruction on the track—because Jose Andre had spun into a wall to the morning race. Riders are barred from changing gear ratios when the yellow flag is up.

Ey was relegated to second with an official time of 27 minutes and 32.12 seconds. Kenko Hilario of Japan completed the top three positions. Arakawa with a morning time of 27:34.46.

"I would happy with the decision. I thought a lot of the drivers passed the yellow flag," said Ey, driving for Global Team Istobel-Mitsubishi Team Asia.

Jones and O'Hara pocket more from the field early in the race was not finished 1-2 for the second straight leg in the event hosted by Yokohama. Ashley Mobile Dawn, Department of Tourism, Philippine Convention and Visitors Corporation, Samsung, Standard Insurance, Petron, Forest Hills Subic, Manila Ballistic, Philippine Star, Authentic Secrets, Team Courbasse and TOT.

The Australian driver, representing Christian Jones Motorsports, clocked 27:26.92 in the morning race and 19:08.56 in the afternoon.

O'Hara, driving for Shell Advance Racing, finished second and hiked his aggregate to 68.

Ey finished the 11-lap drive with a personal-best 19:20.2 and clinched it. But the overall standings with 52 points going into the last leg on Sunday, August.

Alvarez in listless USBL debut

SIDELINED by an injury for some time, former Philippine Basketball Association superstar Paul Alvarez II, with multi- has debut with the Philadelphia Valley Energy in a 110-96 victory over the Cedar Rapids Rivers Rapids on May 23 (May 24 in Manila) in the United States Basketball League.

Alvarez missed the team's first 10 games due to a groin injury.

The former PBA star played just four minutes in his debut, scoring two points on one-of-three shooting, grabbing one rebound and giving away a steal.

Two days later, he suited up for his second game in Pennsylvania's last to the Brooklyn Kings, 110-104.

ALVAREZ: 1 point

Alvarez went scoreless in three minutes on the court and committed just one rebound.

The Jets dropped the Valley Energy to a 11-5 record, one game behind the Kings in the Eastern Division.

Another former PBA player, Vince Hizon, is also in the Valley Energy lineup.

The former teammates of the Barangay Ginebra and Red Bull has to his played 25 games and is averaging 1.5 points on 43 percent shooting from the field and a little over six minutes per outing. Jonathan Mangahas contributed

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
Vol. XXIII, 175

OPINION

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Behind the delay

SPEAKER JOSE DE VENECIA has now recognized himself being caught, by a slip of an overworked tongue, to adversely revealing the truth. This is apparently what happened the other day to opposition candidate Fernando Poe Jr.'s spokesperson, the newly re-elected Rep. Fuentes Escudero.

The real reason the opposition has moved to delay the canvassing, and even seen is considering a petition before the Supreme Court, was exposed through a tell-tale deep hole that Escudero dug for himself during a radio television interview.

EDITORIAL

Hewing to the opposition line that the new canvassing rules may lead to the railroading of the proclamation of the next president, Escudero said he was concerned that administration lawmakers would shoot down any opposition proposal to examine election returns.

He admitted that the new rules, approved on Friday after five days of sometimes vacuous debate, provide for such an examination, but "it is subject to a vote by the committee and majority of the members of the committee are with President Macapagal (Arroyo)."

"Will we go down to the returns or not? If the majority of the joint committee says no we still out, that's the end of it," Escudero said.

Let us set aside for the moment the discussion over whether or not the opposition is entrapped from questioning the authenticity of the some certificates of canvass (by going to the source documents, the election returns) which were already used as basis to proclaim 11 candidates as duly-elected senators, including five from the opposition.

Let us also set aside for the moment the opposition claim that a committee cannot substitute for the Senate and the House of Representatives in doing the constitutionally mandated work of both chambers (something already done in previous elections and in the bicameral conference committee tradition).

Let us only consider Escudero's lament over what today's minority is happy to call the tyranny of numbers. A majority of the members of the newly expanded joint committee is in fact pro-administration; the composition merely reflects the character of the present legislature.

Now, if the basic principle of majority rule applies in the joint committee, it will also apply in both chambers of Congress. In other words, and here we substitute the key words in Escudero's question: "If the majority of both Houses says we will not examine the election returns, that's the end of it."

In other words, the majority has it, whether in a joint session of Congress or merely in a joint committee. If the opposition proposal that both Houses conduct the canvass had been carried, the same principle would have applied. But now that the new canvassing rules have been approved, Escudero turns around and questions the principle of majority rule itself.

What does he want? That the minority assume the role of the majority? That what the opposition was not able to win in the election of 2001 or in the political maneuvering that came after it—control of both houses—the bandied to it as the finest silver?

But Escudero was not yet done. In his interview, he raised his concern that through sheer numbers, pro-administration lawmakers could block every opposition attempt to examine the returns. "What are (they) hiding? What are they afraid of?"

Couldn't the same question be addressed, with more justice, to the opposition lawmakers who have tenaciously defended the canvass? What are they hiding? What are they afraid of? The five-day debate over the new canvassing procedures could not have changed the basic principle: majority rules. Why not begin with the canvass then? If a certificate of canvass were deemed anathematic, the same principle would have ultimately applied whether it was invoked in the original 14-man committee, in the new 22-person committee, or in a joint session.

The truth is out: The opposition wants to change the canvassing conventions that were used in previous elections in order to gain an advantage. Now that they have been denied, they attack the principle that governs a political body such as Congress, and matter dark threats about turning the political into the legal.

Proclamation: Better late than wrong

AS I SEE IT

Neal H. Cruz

THE SENATORS labored and brought forth a mouse. After five days and nights of unbroken debates, Congress approved the rules to govern the canvassing of votes for president and vice president. The debates took that long—which is unimpressive—because the pro-opposition senators wanted to make the rules that will govern the railroading of the proclamation of any candidates. For proclamation is the key in the convoy of a chosen. Once he is proclaimed, he becomes the president and, although there is evidence that his rival was cheated, the latter has to go through the tedious, long and expensive election protest that takes the electoral tribunal as cursory as snakes.

Despite heroic efforts of the outnumbered opposition to propose amendments to make the canvassing rules fairer, Congress stood down almost all of those proposals. Mostly, the votes supported were those the same as those originally proposed by the sponsors. There was little change to make them fairer and prevent the congressional railroad from proclaiming the wrong "winner."

The congressional leadership banned the opposition by allotting them exactly their heads of small until past midnight, knowing that when it came to voting, the administration would have the numbers to defeat the opposition. Every time an amendment was proposed, the Senate and House spokesmen for the administration administration legislators, gave the same answer: "The sponsors reject the amendments." When the issue was brought to the floor for voting, the "ayes" always won because of the tyranny of numbers.

I found the proposed amendments sensible and they would have prevented railroading. They would have slow down the railside process somewhat, and would have provided it with credibility and transparency. But the proposed amendments were all voted down. No wonder the opposition is afraid the administration would railroad the proclamation of President Macapagal-Arroyo.

"The proposed rules are so restrictive that it removes railroading," said opposition Sen. Edgardo Angara.

A crucial point is the "authenticity" or "genuineness" of the certificate of canvass where the total number of votes the candidates garnered in each province is tallied. This is what Congress is supposed to canvass.

Congress gets the original, which COC has no duplicates. Congress gets the original. Comelec the first copy, and Smartmatic the second copy. The majority and dominant opposition parties also get a copy each. The distribution of the COC copies is to make sure any of the interested parties to compare their copy to the original which will be the one canvassed.

What if the numbers in the original are not the same as those in the copies? According to the rules, the votes will be counted anyway and the question of authenticity will be treated as an election protest, which will go to the presidential electoral tribunal for adjudication, which means the case won't be decided until after the term of unelected supreme to the elected candidate.

In the rules, the "authenticity" of a COC can be questioned only if "there are manners and circumstances of fraud, tampering, substitution and clumsy marks are missing. Otherwise, it would be treated as "authentic" even if it does not tally with the copies.

If the original and its copies are not the same, then something is terribly wrong. They cannot all be "authentic." Webster's New World Dictionary defines "authentic" as:

1. "that which can be believed or accepted, trustworthy; reliable; 2. that is in fact as represented; genuine; real.... Authentic implies reliability and trustworthiness, meaning that the thing considered is in agreement with fact or actuality." If an original COC and its copies differ, then there cannot be believed; they are not reliable and trustworthy. They cannot all be "authentic." They will all be under suspicion. They should, therefore, not be counted and they should be set aside and if it is determined by investigation which are "authentic" and which are not.

A situation who falsifies a COC will inevitably take pains to make the false COC look "authentic," clean and with no visible erasures and alterations. A good operator will "clean" made rats, through bribery or forgery, that the required signatures and thumb marks are there. Such a false or altered COC will therefore pass the scrutiny of the national canvassing board.

The only way to find out the truth is to go back to the source of the COCs, which are the city, municipal election returns, or even to the precinct levels, if necessary. But the Congress majority said it is futile in order to canvass the votes, not to determine the genuineness of the number of votes.

What are they there for then? Counting votes be done by clerks with calculators. It won't need the services of the "honorable" members of Congress to do that. Obviously the Commission gave them that job because counting the votes for president and vice president is so important that it has to be done by "competent and public officials. To reduce picking possible fraud, through technicalities, being "responsible"?

The excuse, of course, is not to delay the canvassing, and to allow the president to be proclaimed by June 30 when the terms of all senators expire, but isn't a little delay better than a proclamation of the wrong winner?

If no winners are proclaimed by June 30, the senators whose terms expire on June 30 will continue to perform their duties as senators until their successors have been elected and qualified. Their successors will not take office until noon of June 30 next year. So there won't be any power vacuum.

There would not be any harm, therefore, The senators whose terms will be eventually proclaimed are sure. What is important is for the canvassing to be credible; to make the people believe and accept the verdict of Congress.

Good news, bad news

THERE'S THE RUB

Gerardo de Quiros

THERE'S good news and bad news in the senatorial races.

The good news is that the voters have wised up as a party. Enteng Kabuchi will no longer be free to joan himself off as the bulwark of anticorruption in the Senate, a spate of his that was surely soupers Jesus Christ's injunction, "Let him who has no sin cast the first stone." It is no small transformation for has an ought-span-lot-off, thanks to the Filipino's implacable contempt for the tyranny of numbers.

Senator Juan Ponce Enrile referred to as "the young and no one-ego" is losing his. Expect. His electoral ad had him looking at the world with a three pace, along with the blurb that reading makes those eyes, in two tableaux of unbelievable cruelty, nothing—of value—escapes those eyes.

Over two are Robert Jaworski's days of debiting from the hard count to the soft one. His promoters may have no end of things to say about that he has done in the past, but he is currently asked if he added to or merely subtracted from the sum of Philippine lawmaking, or indeed of human knowledge, during his time in the Senate. Stripped reliously remember him as the senator who voted implicitly, during the impeachment trial of Joseph Estrada, to defend Erap in the impeachment trial, but who swiftly materialized in the film that he during the height of several people's power. And successful, like Congo lineman, only in getting himself booed and called names everywhere except in town cockpits. Well, I will be kind and remember him as well as the spiritual leader of the basketball team, Tapias. He should have left his reputation there.

The bad news is that the voters have wised up—only to a point. Manila and Quezon voted one dogpot, then a always 2007. If Juan Ponce Enrile and Miriam Defensor Santiago are acquiring or go by, they can always score on getting back through another implacable purchase of 11 votes, which is in large things. I personally thought Manila and Quezon voted for Erap because themselves rejected law in 2001, following her downfall rule in the impeachment trial, but outdoor having to repeat—and Dinky Ilusorio's name sting and turned "Shut up!" into the national motto. Indeed, following her son's death when she promised to forsake politics forever, and when she abandoned her senators' ticket and joined Cesar Virata's Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino, but this country never ceases to surprise me, like Chuck and Bert or senatorial discourtesy with her Visayan American—her answer to 60 hours American—answer.

The voters haven't had time. Chief of them is that there is no truth to the fabled five days of the ex-senators are sure in politics. Ex-senators will have differentiality in local elections, where popularity or media exposure can be often for money and fame from they will be used in national elections, where popularity or media exposure can, and will, offset resources and machinery. The results of the senatorial race show so.

At the very least, you have voter-voter name of the action outlays among the senators—Bong Revilla, Tito Legarda and singers Sarsaba, Revilla has made it all the way to No. 2, though a great amount to like Sonia. 20 get to Sonia in a while because he doesn't disprove the rule, he affirms it. Though Revilla, Legarda and Sarsaba have had, like Erap, a more broad political fanbase supporting for senator, they have little to endear them to the voters other than their movies.

Judith Madrigal is not unlike Ramon Revilla Sr. In The first time Revilla ran, he lost and lost badly; the second time he did, he won and won big. Madrigal, a top-of-the-topic was overtaken by the simple expedient of using his screen name in lieu of his real one—he made the role-take of using the latter the first time. Madrigal had several minor pardons running for senator every election and losing. People were wondering how her family could allow her to loose away the family fortune for a patently futile cause. Until she hit on the bright idea of using a de facto proxy candidate in the person of Judy Ann Santos in real-life fact. From personality landing in the soft end of the running, she suddenly catapulted to No. 4.

Another actress made her acting claim, but don't slocker story. The flat should publicity lady-turnout Noemie Bengzon. Sharon Cuneta should really be eating their vote, she went the race time around.

The other phenomenal showing, comparable to that de Cuneta's equally phenomenal showing in 2001, must evolve bit too. Jo Comelec of "Magandang Gabi, Bayan," Noon had Bobby Jacobs. I've always thought that for all the controversy they generate—or precisely because of it—the Noon Time Show is a good launching pad for the first and second dos to any senatorial race in this country. Such is the power of ABS-CBN, and such is the power of entertainment, however mediocre called "infotainment." Notch, I would say, was the downfall of Jaye Sebastian and the exceptionally strong showing of Nina Puno. She endorsed him, and he is currently No. 2. The line is the only time I can think there has for something something to publish: you couldn't have endorsed a better candidate.

Of course, the spoilers "Mr. Principle" and Bayaya ni Edgar's "Mr. Kuno" did the trick as well for Noon. Which should make one ask whether Noon won because of his intellectual abilities, or his cause, a politician to the gold on sign of Philippine politics, or because of his acting or willingness, to mess with make believe pahogbara.

One last question: Does GMA's showing against Fernando Poe is disprove the conviction that show biz remains the chief path to power?

Say as all. Chili just proved to be the most reactive person. But that is another story or again.

Out with obnoxious manners, please

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan

SPEAKER Jose de Venecia was quoted as saying that any documentary proof in the files of Congress does not "legislative intent" for the "purely private entity" rules in the Congress's joint session. JDV said that if the Sixty Congressmembers formalize their concern, "we would look into it." But, he added, "Mr. Speaker, we are voluminous memory, and please don't try to challenge us."

By the way, Malacañang's "shut up, shut up" line is now the favorite line of Pinoy callers to radio talk shows throughout the nation. Your single episode in the Batasan last Wednesday night perhaps earned you a lot of votes from supporters of the opposition candidate. Suddenly Eugenio Pido became a heroine.

Congress is in joint session each day long days of debates last week—one of them ending at 2 a.m. to approve the rules of canvass for candidates for president and vice president in each house. Most of the prepared debates centered on the organization of the joint committee that would conduct the canvass of the certificates of canvass (COCs) and certificates of votes for the next top positions. Finally, at close to midnight last Friday, the amended rules were passed by what JDV termed as an "overwhelming" unanimous vote of 220 members of the House and 20 senators in the Senate. The opposition is expected to ask anew its written objections today.

With the approval of the rules of engagement, the hard task falls to the task of perusing the COCs. Today, Senate President Franklin Drilon begins opening the sealed COCs in the order they came in from the provinces and abroad. More fireworks are anticipated.

Interestingly, however, on the eve of the opening, a group has called itself the Coalition for Hope, which is clearly identified with candidate Bro. Eddie Villanueva, ran full-page ads in the newspapers advocating that "rush hour must stop" not just from the COCs, but from "all those votes, only of the [alleged] patriots"—the persons named in the certificates of votes (COVs) and the certified statement of votes (SOVs) and the city or provincial COCs. This procedure, stressed the coalition, will result "all possible irregularities" between the "input" (the COEs and the SOVs) and the "output" (the COCs). In this connection, SOTF is recommending that the process be applied to at least four provinces, Cebu and Iloilo, where GMA scored her highest votes, and Lagunas and Nueva Ecija, where FPJ had the highest tallies.

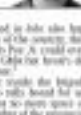
The problem here, as pointed out by Senate Rep. Eduardo Ermita, the House spokesman of the joint committee on canvassing Congress, is that the National Board of Canvassers, is that its constitutional mandate is to determine the "authenticity and due execution" of the COCs and certificates of votes results. Congress is not mandated to go beyond the COCs unless they are clearly marked by erasures and other glaring defects. In cases where COCs are deemed questionable, the Board of Canvassers may call joint committee as soldiers down as provided by the recently approved canvass rules, and by RA 7166 (which was passed in 1991 to synchronize elections national and local which was in 1992). For instance, the joint committee can check the questioned COC submitted to Congress, which is the original copy, against any of the six "authorized copies." Or it can check with the Comelec and the dominant majority and minority parties. The rules also provide that officials of the provincial or municipal boards of canvassers may be summoned to answer questions about the COCs.

Obviously, what the close-looking members of Congress would do need to be aware Pandora's box by going through the COCs and the certificates, which could delay the canvass considerably and create a vacuum in leadership. Commissioner Joaquin Bernas has proposed that these issues such move on the part of some opposition lawmakers.

Given this background, the amendments suddenly proposed by Sen. Edgardo Angara last Friday night to have the joint committee say issue three "manifest" reports, one report after every 10 million votes, instead of the two, did not only deadline-conscious reports at the end of the canvass, drew heavy objections from the majority lawmakers. They eventually voted it down. Sen. Johnny Ansay asserted that since the agreement among the members of Congress is that canvassing of COCs will be set aside and the canvass shall go ahead with report to the unchallenged ones, the intention, he claim, could be disruptive, giving the perception that one candidate is "leading." It could be revealing, said Johnny.

After five days of heated arguments, Speaker De Venecia adopted without objection the rules, which the biggest applause was the humble Rep. Rufus Rodriguez for his tireless sponsorship of the resolution and patient handling of queries and some insults from some members. Rodriguez, who has been feted to being "de-appointed" with Sen. Edu Manglapus's role of handling his role, but then was often just seen as the "messenger boy" for Speaker de Venecia, who was the real protector of the ruling coalition and Majority Leader Prospero Nograles, who's winding up their reign in the House and will assume the leadership of Malacañang come July 1. Gonzales displayed an ability in handling all the hot potatoes and a thorough knowledge of parliamentary rules that his father, the late Senate President Ramon Gonzales Sr. would have been very proud of. The two leaders of Congress, Drilon and De Venecia, in spite plenty of teasing exercises from some of their own colleagues, manifested a steely patience in smoothing parliamentary exercises even in the circumstances.

Messy



KRIS-CROSSING MINDANAO

Asuncion Mendaña

I HAVE seen my friend excited into the armpit of George Bush, and on CBS's "Comedy Central," she kissed retrieved to her as "Oh my, my, my, hello," adding "in fact I've got her right here," as he reached into his rear pocket, to much canned laughter.

But I never realized Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo was on to small until I saw her posing in that photo session with Bro. Eddie Villanueva, with Bro. Eddie on the left, and Gloria on the right, and in the newspaper advertising that "rush hour must stop" not just from the COCs, but from "all those votes, only of the [alleged] patriots"—the persons named in the certificates of votes (COVs) and the certified statement of votes (SOVs) and the city or provincial COCs. This procedure, stressed the coalition, will result "all possible irregularities" between the "input" (the COEs and the SOVs) and the "output" (the COCs). In this connection, SOTF is recommending that the process be applied to at least four provinces, Cebu and Iloilo, where GMA scored her highest votes, and Lagunas and Nueva Ecija, where FPJ had the highest tallies.

Before that, there was the infamous photo of Gloria with Susan Roces, who was then running for senator on the ticket of Joseph Estrada, and Jinggoy Estrada, who was then running for mayor of San Juan. Gloria was on the left, Susan on the right, and Jinggoy in the middle, with Gloria's hand on Jinggoy's head, and Susan's hand on Jinggoy's shoulder, and Jinggoy's hand on Susan's shoulder, and Susan's hand on Jinggoy's shoulder, and Jinggoy's hand on Gloria's head, and Gloria

Filipinos 10-feet tall with Taguba

LETTERS

With some luck a brief encounter in 1974—that's 26 years ago—with then Capt. Antonio Taguba, now a two-star major general of the US army, in the limelight for his report on the abuses committed by American soldiers against Iraqi prisoners.

In a moment in time during the service's artillery schooling at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, where the then Capt. Toni Taguba (second from left in photo) was assigned, I took the opportunity of inviting Philippine military personnel to celebrate the Philippine Armed Forces Day. Taguba played a significant role in leading the celebration a resounding success. He personally wrote out of his way not only to gather the Filipinos but also to set up a colorful Filipino dance presentation that made us proud of our Filipino roots. His remarks are incredible inasmuch as were mine. "I am proud to be a Filipino and humbly will I try my worth to the US Army, as my father fought in Bataan."

Again, as he was very fond, home to the Philippines, I had the privilege to call on his mother in Rosario. Her modest nest was plentifully surveying "Mr. we

(Antonio) leaves the table he faces to his military career which includes in one way or another decommendation. He is proud of his father, a Bataan veteran who accepted honors, join the military." And then jokingly, she reminded, "I would like him to take that one of our kind for his life-time partner." He was still then a bachelor.

Needless to say, with former Gen. Benjamin Defensor of Bataan in politics and godsy Dorothy Defensor in sports, the Filipinos stand, 10 feet tall with Bataan, Antonio Taguba wondering his nugget Filipino taboo.

—VICENTE DUMAHIT SANTIBAÑEZ, colonel (ret.), (Rtd), Augustinian ng mga Kaval ni Hukbalahap Filipino
Highland Chic,
Camp Aguinaldo, Quezon City

'Fifth Estate' of Philippine society?

THE ALL OUT media hype on Senator Tito who nearly survived and won the title American Idol is downright indecisive of the kind of valiant media are molding today's generation of Filipinos.

While there's no quibble in expressing of support on Pi for the fifteen girl from Bicutan, in essence, hardly did the courage and heroism displayed by soldiers Fil-Am, Maj. Dan Antonio Tapales, earn a squeak.

Tapales's report, and his assessment before the United States Senate listed the "valiant, heroic and winning" acts by US guards or soldiers in Iraq's Abu Ghraib prison. By doing this, she proved demonstrated moral fortitude. He became an inspiration for people who are so used by what is right despite the risks. Tapales is worth the attentions of heavily right-wing Filipinos who still more money even in their blind times.

Together with the Senate and Congress, Iraq's top official, her sweeping remarks against homosexuals and of members—so, insensitive. Trying to sound populist, to say the least, she demeaned the love that two people have for each other, and even send children's impressionable minds at the bottom for her cruel intent. Now, what do we do with all the violence portrayed in media? Were those movies that showcase homosexual desire, the flaunting of heterosexual sex and the lives of corrupt politicians meaningless pastimes?

Public officials that badmouth people and preach discrimination should be booted out of office. Homosexuals die just same. They are citizens of this republic. They have us all levels and branches of government. They do you must care and look. And yet, they also inspire your babies and grandchildren. One might have something personal against them for what they are, but no public official has the right to declare them intolerable or demented.

—ATTY. ISRAEL I. ARCILLA,
PhD in Ethics and Social Theory,
Graduate Theological Union,
1798 Scenic Avenue, Berkeley,
CA 94709 USA

'Double standard of immorality'

THE REACTIONS of MTRCB Chairman Lupendo about gay marriages. ("The think" scolded for saying lesbian wedding." PDI, 5/22/04) saddens me. Has she just come out of a cave or something? Maybe that's a young question, because our ancestors, long before the americanized came to show us how to live "Lubong-Bulu," had respect for people of different sexual orientations. In fact, the "babaylan(s)," the male cross-dressing priests, were admired, relied to sages, and served the "balangay" together with the village chief.

Coming from the Hindu Taboo

And to say, Philippine media hardly made any subsequent background stories on him and on his Filipino clients and relatives in the Philippines. What a shame.

But that is media today. Ninety-five percent drivel by media have spurred the revelation of «mass amusement celebration» such as "Pinoy Estate" of Philippine society.

—VICTOR PEREZ JR.,
1100 Gainty St., Brixton Gerding,
Parañaque City

Where have all the youth gone?

ACCORDING to Gaudie de Quiroz in her column "There and now," PDI, 5/26/04, during the Marcos regime, she missed parties of election, "who enough to drive the youth in particular out of classrooms and into the streets." But "what, none of it is there today"

Perhaps, the youth who were in the current dimension may consider have grown into responsible adults, and they are now called rather in their respective homes with more families or in their respective offices, factories or places of work, busy earning a living.

Or, however, as Dr Quiroz observed in his column, "Today, the public looks at a world gone mad and weary and narcissistic." The youth are either busy studying in the hope of having a better future, or those out of school are busy looking for jobs abroad.

—ROLLO S. ARCALA,
20 Pili Pelle St.,
Indiana, Quezon

Among the killers of Nick Berg

ELDER Pauline Reid, who claims to be both American and Filipino, issues histrionic editorial over Cpmy P Bacon—and, by implication, all others opposed to the US-led war against Iraq—on rage against the beheading of Nick Berg, which was done in celebration for American abuses against Iraqi prisoners of war. Likewise, IL UK SIC.

The timing of Berg's beheading could not have been more perfect for one who justifies the Iraq war as one where "wives, men and women can... where women and cowards dare not go, to defend the world's freedom against barbaric jihadists whose dream is to reign all infidels (you and me) off planet Earth," as Reid so eloquently put it.

The sympathies of the Filipino people for Pauline and defender with Berg and his father, who put the blame for his son's appalling execution squarely on the shoulders of the Coalition of the Willing (all to read "Shameless"), which includes President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Reid fails to tell why the US prepared up Saddam in Baghdad and allowed him to put Kurds and slaughter Shiites, only to drop him later for refusing to surrender control of Iraq's oil resources.

She fails to ask the smuggled of world power why, if it were to expunge "terrorism," they installed a country already helpless after more than a decade of economic embargo, and then made it fight with bomb flown and Libya school have no qualms about mass murders.

And fails to ask what price US military personnel the right to abuse Iraqi captured in the course of a war that should bread for all and gold.

I don't completely misuse the noun that patriotism and love for democracy but never mount capricious hegemonic drives.

Like Hostes Humanis, whose fault washes them to mass chaos who would destroy their way of life by outlawing them. While unanimously there low financial investments among them who are using by worldwide terrain, the fact remains that, as a people, they are being provoked to fight. Their right to live as human has been ruthlessly usurped ever since the time of the Crusades—a series of severely barbaric conquests of the land they cherished—which brought about unjust and mass murders in their wake, and chains of wealth back to "Christian" Europe. These facts are conspicuous by absent from Reid's perpetual knowledge.

Instead, she feels it fit to take the path of racial religious self-righteousness, in so doing, she contributes heavily to the xenophobia of the long dilemma and exudes conflict all throughout the world. She and her ilk are among the killers of Nick Berg. By this, she has no right to call herself either American or Filipino. For she sells the libertarian hinterlands of the Americans and Filipino people.

—ERNIE TUVILLA GUERRA,
KATAGUMPAY-PILIPINO,
ALEJANDRO MARTIN EMOR LIGA
for the Filipino Youth for Peace,
http://www.filipinoyouthforpeace.org.ph

Real Brother Eddie

BRO. Eduardo "Eddie" Villanueva refuses to concede defeat, alleging that massive cheating in various forms, marred the May 10 elections.

How "massive" was the overturning in the last elections? I thought the supporters of Brother Eddie are a godly, highly principled lot? Do they have could they have been "cheated"?

How did Brother Eddie lose when through "divine intervention"? Did Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo work down, before the elections, all those who in her mind's eye could defeat her, and then, having identified them, had their names written out of the voters' list?

"Miraculous human error!" Is no way must about Iniquitous mysterious if he listened to the ordinary persons—albeit too ordained to elaborate him—given by many officials and have could the Iniquitous to be cheated? The Comelec, Namfrel, IL4 and NAP all had their own copies of the certificates of canvass, and any discrepancy could have been easily discerned from the COCs.

So what if Brother Eddie does not concede? It is not required to him as and no one seems to mind.

As days pass, the unveiling of the real Brother Eddie—the multi-billionaire, the wife with a penchant for expensive couture lurking behind the mantle of holiness—will be complete.

—JESUS LAGUDA,
11-B Fatima Drive,
Sta. Teresita Village,
Bambang City

Promoting 'cool' greed in advertisements

TWO cute guys appear on your TV screen. Guy No. 1 is holding a chicken sandwich, while Guy No. 2 is eating Guy No. 1 but not before giving Guy No. 1, his No. 1 lucky his chicken sandwich with all parts. Meanwhile, Guy No. 2 feeds his appetite for the sandwich.

Nine times the situation is reversed. Guy No. 2 is holding a plastic glass of soft drink blowing bubbles into it before handing the soft drink to Guy No. 1, who had raised for a sip.

Not only is this commercial disgusting, it is devastating. Its subtle is crazy be devouring, but for kids, who constantly absorb unusual events on TV, it may be a lesson in values.

The ad subtly mentioned, greed, it teaches people to be smart sticks. It teaches people to offer something without really meaning it. It teaches people to deliberately do something bad or improper while appearing clean, even smart and cool.

It is, not farfetched for kids to think that being greedy is cool for as long as one admits to it or smartly hides it from being seized. This is what the corrupt politicians do. They drink their greed by imitating the conventions of basketball courts, docks, overpriced roads, flood-building, etc.

Advertisers should be more circumspect with their commercials. On the surface, they may look harmless and amusing, but deep down to people's consciousness, they may just be promoting greed, or making this dangerous word usual, and, eventually acceptable. It would not be a surprise if we see smart-alecky kids later grow up to become corrupt adults.

—ARNOLD SIMPRADA,
secretary general, Salikdik Foundation Inc.,
salikdik03@yahoomail.com.ph

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The text of letters to the editor are requested to include their complete address and telephone or pager number or e-mail address for verification purposes. The Inquirer will not publish any letter unless such information is supplied.

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Across the NATION

Assistant Editor Tony Burgonio

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Vizcaya special polls turn fortunes of local bets

SANTA DEL NORTE, Nueva Vizcaya—The special elections on Saturday in Barangay Binuangan have overturned the fortunes of some local candidates.

The outcome of the special polls now tied to shrinking the 804-vote lead in the provincial board for the province's southern district, the mayoral contest and four posts in the town council.

The top casualty of the special polls was reelectionist Board Member Efren Quiñon, who was leading outgoing Santa Fe Mayor Teodoro Padilla Jr. by a 254-vote margin before Saturday's elections.

But the votes from Binuangan erased Quiñon's lead, and he eventually lost by 137 votes to Padilla.

Comelec records showed that 489 of the village's 641 registered voters cast their votes in three precincts at the Binuangan Elementary School.

In the mayoral race, reelectionist Mayor Irene Hizmeño of Lakas-CMD lost to Vice Mayor Jesus Ibieng of the Lakas ng Demokratikong Pilipino by 175 votes. Before the special elections, Hizmeño had a 17-vote lead over Ibieng.

The votes from Binuangan, however, tabled to shake up the last four places in the town's eight-member council, as the candidates maintained their respective positions.

The Commission on Elections earlier declared a failure of elections in Binuangan after ballot boxes in three precincts there were taken by four armed men on May 11.

Several witnesses' accounts, including an Army report, identified Hizmeño as the main suspect in the incident. Hizmeño, however, denied the charges.

Nueva Vizcaya Bishop Ramon Villena praised the "courage and determination" of the villagers for casting their votes despite the tension among candidates in the town.

"The Binuangan experience is a powerful but a good lesson for all of us—a lesson on the value of the votes, the sanctity of which must always be respected," Villena said.

After the precincts closed at 3 p.m. on Saturday, election workers and poll watchers took the three ballot boxes to the municipal hall in Barangay Malasin for canvassing.

Ibieng's supporters, who stood guard at the canvassing venue until Sunday morning, stopped the efforts of Hizmeño's lawyers to prevent the proclamation of Ibieng and the four new councilors at around 6 a.m. The provincial board of canvassers also proclaimed Padilla on Sunday morning.

Villena credited the police and the military, who provided tight security during the voting and counting, for the conduct of a peaceful special elections in the village.

About 130 troops from the police mobile group and the Army's 54th Infantry Battalion secured the village during the special elections. Mabilo Guarin, Northern Luzon Bureau

Bello offers to mediate between Padaca, Dy

ILAGAN, Isabela—The government's chief peace negotiator said he is willing to mediate between winning gubernatorial candidate Ms. Grazia Cielo Padaca and incumbent Gov. Faustino Dy Jr. to maintain the "good relations" among political leaders in Isabela.

Former Justice Secretary Hernando Perez III, also the presidential adviser for Cagayan Valley and Lakas-CMD regional chair, said reconciliation between Padaca and Dy would help Isabela attain progress.

The proclamation of Padaca, who beat Dy by 10,293 votes, was suspended on May 22 after Dy sought her disqualification. The incumbent governor cited Padaca's alleged links to New People's Army rebels as basis for the disqualification case.

Padaca, a public-relations-former radio commentator, denied Dy's accusations.

Bello said Padaca, should she be finally proclaimed as the duly elected governor of Isabela, should reach out to other politicians, opponents and her supporters to avoid division in the province.

The results of the recent elections are "an accurate voice of the people," he said. "There is no other choice but to accept their decision. We cannot subvert the will of the people."

In a statement, Salvador del Prado, spokesperson of the Communist Party of the Philippines/NPA/National Democratic Front in Cagayan Valley, said Padaca's victory "was the result of unity and determination, in and out of polling precincts, of the broad ranks of the people." *With* Jaime Bunyan *in Ilagan and* Tarra Quismorio *in Isabela*

Military exercise rumors fly in GenSan

GENERAL SANTOS CITY—The presence of United States military personnel in the South Cotabato-Sultan Kudarat-Sarangani-Davao Occidental-Davao del Sur (Soccsksargen) area has fanned rumors that the joint RP-US military exercise would be held here.

Mayor Lumaindal Mamosmod of Palimbang town, Sultan Kudarat, told the Inquirer that his constituents were baffled by the presence of four US servicemen in his area.

The foreigners, two of them identified as Dbl. David Duffield and Lt. David Albertson, all from the US Army, were reportedly escorted by government forces under the Army's 7th Special Forces Battalion based in the village.

Bunkhouses

The US military personnel had reportedly put up bunkhouses near the base camp of the Army's 7th Special Forces in Barangay Kiyaw. This is where the Jamiyat Ansar Khalifah Fisabilillah and 34 of his men landed on July 5 last year.

Mamosmod said nobody had informed him about the arrival of US troops in his town.

Col. Alfredo Capoy, commander of the Army's 601st Infantry Brigade, said the American soldiers arrived in Palimbang on May 25 as part of the advanced party of the US medical team, which is planning to conduct medical missions in the Muslim-populous area.

He said there is a plan to hold the war games in nearby South Cotabato, particularly in Carmen town. "There's a wide area there. But everything is still on a planning stage," Capoy said.

Apollo Zonio, *PDI Mindanao Bureau*

Cops free suspect in gov's ambush

CAMP VICENTE (28), Laguna — The Mindanao police on Friday released an alleged leader of the New People's Army (NPA) being implicated in the failed ambush of newly elected Occidental Mindoro Gov. Josephine Sato a few months ago.

Senior Supt. Severino Pinzaway, public information chief of the Mindanao police, said they found no strong evidence to connect suspect Reynaldo Isidro, 35, in the March 3 ambush of Sato in a resort village in Sta. Cruz town.

He also cancelled a news conference to announce Isidro to the media.

"During the tactical interrogation, Isidro consistently denied that he was an NPA member. There was also insufficient evidence to link him to the ambush of Sato so we decided to release him. But we are still gathering other information about him," Pinzaway told the reporters.

He said they failed to verify military intelligence reports which allegedly identified Isidro as a ranking rebel leader in Mindoro. He said the suspect was also suspected as the leader of the dreaded "Bistek Gang."

The suspect also has no warrants from any courts in the province nor was he charged for any illegal acts, he added.

Last month, Isidro sought the help of Bing Bermudez, president of the green group based at this camp, to facilitate his "surrender." Bermudez said Isidro just wanted to clear his name after the military started harassing the suspect's family.

"Isidro called me up last week and asked me if the green group could help him in giving himself up to the police," Bermudez said.

He said he immediately contacted Chief Supt. Medardo Lapeid, Mimaropa police director, during the weekend to arrange Isidro's surrender. He said Isidro, his wife and two children, arrived in this camp from Mindoro on Wednesday night.

Col. Fernando Mesia, chief of the 204th Infantry Brigade based in Mindoro, had earlier named Isidro as the mastermind of a hacked assembly in Sta. Cruz, as the "brain" of another suspected NPA rebel, Rodrick Tolentino, who was arrested almost three weeks ago.

Commission spokesperson Gregorio "Ka Roger" Rosal denied accusing Isidro. "Camp Ola Bin man is a resource in Mindoro and in other parts of the country. For years, the military and the police assist in counter-insurgency as a dangerous measure to protect supposed NPA elite their inside military operations," Rosal said in a phone interview.

Rosal urged leaders and other victims of military harassment to come out in public and expose "these inhumane acts of the bloodthirsty military."

Despite his acquittal, Isidro said he is still scared for the life and safety of his family. He said unidentified military personnel had been harassing the houses of his siblings in Sta. Cruz, Murallon Batuan, Pili Sanchez-Juson Barcena

BSP, businesses discover theft of dormant accounts

By Vincent Cabreza
PhilNorthern Luzon Bureau

BAGUIO CITY—Why rob a bank when all you need to do is research a few buttons to get the cash you need?

Baguio-based businessmen and Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas officials discovered the theft of a dormant bank account here at a Chinese-Filipino day bar that was accessed through the automated teller machines.

Dr. William Occidental, the account holder, said bank officials could not explain how they lost P115,000 of his dormant account.

He said businessmen suspected that more bank clients could have been victimized this way.

Under BSP rules, accounts, where no withdrawals or deposits are made for a whole year, are automatically frozen by bank computers and are considered to remain security account that cannot be accessed by ATM networks.

A dormant account that remains frozen for 10 years will revert to the national treasury, said Commander Baguios, BSP Baguio manager handling its gold-buying operations.

A former BSP economist, Augustus said government banks have always converted clan funds, which run their own security systems, could find ways to consume these dormant accounts without alerting the government.

Computer software are still available to banking, he said, but dormant accounts can only be accessed through the bank's personnel.

"A dormant account can only be activated and removed in the ATM system if there is a power failure all over the country," Augustus said.

Occidental said he had allowed his account to go dormant, believing it was a safe way to preserve his savings. The bank had advised him every year that the account was issued a monthly P200 penalty since it was opened in August 1999, he said.

"I never received it, as records still prove. But when I checked my account in January, I was surprised that amounts were slowly being deducted by the ATM, which were withdrawn by the machines of another bank. The transactions were made between Jan. 8 and 13, and from P4,000 to P10,000 was deducted in a series of withdrawals each day. An account is allowed only up to P20,000 withdrawal each transaction day," he said.

He reported the incident and asked bank officials to put a freeze on the transactions on Jan. 13.

Roundup

Wanted: 100 teachers for Negros Or.

DUMAGUETE CITY—The provincial schools division needs at least 200 teachers to fill in the newly opened items as well as those recalled by the retirees. Schools Division Superintendent Ariel Abaw said about 100 were the new items and over 100 were vacancies brought about by the retirements. She however said that the new items would be given to teachers, who are already working in public schools but are qualified for the items. She said government is also looking for those graduates not yet using their same benefits with those employed by the Department of Education. Abaw said the hiring of 200 teachers would not fully solve the need for more teachers in the province, but the budget could address more teachers because of lack of funds. The schools need classrooms and books, she added. But Abaw said the problem is not so bad because the Department got help from the local government units.
Sonny Amorsolo, PDI Visayas Bureau

Electronics firm's assets seized

MANDAUE CITY—Labor officials are confiscating the assets of an electronics firm that they have penalized for allegedly abandoning its employees at the Pagsabungan Export Processing Zone. The National Labor Relations Commission is garnishing the property of Microtel Systems (Philippines) Inc. and has ordered its owners to remit P1.3 million in unpaid backwages of 48 terminated employees. But the firm has since relocated to the Subic Bay Freeport Zone using a new corporate name, the NLRC reported.
Bernard Galvez, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

5 die in 2 mishaps in Batangas

Five persons died in two road accidents in Lipa City and Batangas City on Thursday. Killed were Brenda Santos Segovieng, Michaela Mascardon, and a certain Jolo, all of Barangay San Nicolas, Hagonoy, Bulacan. The passenger they were riding overturned in a curve in Sitio Bagbalon, Barangay Mataas, Lipa City, Batangas police director Senior Supt. Pioneth Rodriguez said. The victims died instantly after they were thrown out of the vehicle. Senior Insp. Marlon Mendoza said they were on Barangay Sico Nicolas, Hagonoy, Bulacan when the accident occurred. Also killed were Jay Segovieng, Rodolfo Santos, Jovito Segovieng, Carlo Mangahas, and Mhark Buenaventura, also of Barangay San Nicolas. In Batangas City, Gladiola Marquez, a government employee from Barangay Bolingkan and Pinitic East, a businessman from Evangelista Street died after they were riding in motorcycle when they collided with an oncoming car that took the wrong lane of the national road, Batangas Officials. Police said the victims were aboard an owner-type jeep and heading east at about 1:15 a.m. when a car, owned by PI Coca Inc., and driven by Rolando Pandoc of Pinitic City, crossed over right through the jeep. Marquez was rushed to the Batangas Regional Hospital but died upon arrival. Two were killed in the fatal. The body of Dela was released to Dr. Ben San Fernando Funeral Service.
Rio Rogers, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

9 out-of-school youths go to college

By Jeffrey Pilapinga
PDI Mindanao Bureau

IGAN CITY—There's hope for at least nine out-of-school youths here, who were forced to abandon their secondary education because of poverty.

By next month, they could step into college and choose what course to take to help their parents for their future.

Dr. Mae Bingo, the city's non-formal education supervisor, said the nine youths, whom she did not name, had passed the Non-formal Education Accreditation and Equivalency (NFAE) test, which the Department of Education gave to at least 98 out-of-school youths here in March.

She said the passers "have graduated well as the NFAE is rewarding."

"The NAE test was much more difficult than the high school graduate test (which most incoming high school students took on May 24)," Bingo told the Inquirer.

She said the nine passers would finally get their diplomas, signed by Education Sec. Edilberto de Jesus, in June.

Meanwhile, incoming high school freshmen who were unable to take the high school readiness test would have to wait another year before they can proceed to the secondary level.

One of them was 15-year-old Jeanel Balajadia, who was on vacation when the test was administered last week.

Bingo said Jeanel would have to wait for one year "because there are no special exams for those who failed to take the readiness test."

Transport group happy over fare hikes but seeks end to deregulation

CALAMBA CITY—A transport group in Southern Tagalog has expressed jubilation over the forthcoming increase in jeepney fares, but said they were "saddened by the continued existence of the monopolizing oil cartel and the oil deregulation law."

"Our sector is happy that we will finally gain the fruits of what we have struggled for in years. But it is sad that Republic Act No. 8479 (Downstream Oil Deregulation Act) remains and one of our demands for the government to end the oil cartel has not been answered," said Rolando Mitapo, spokesperson of the Southern Tagalog Alliance of Transport Sector (Stats).

The Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board has approved a minimum fare hike of P1.00 for jeepneys and P2 for ordinary buses to take effect either on June 9 or 16.

Jeepney commuters would have to pay P8.00 for the first four kilometers and P1 for each succeeding kilometer.

The increase came after a recent P1 increase in oil prices. Transport groups in Southern Tagalog have been calling for the increase in fare hike since the simultaneous rounds of oil price hikes in the first quarter of the year.

Transportation was paralyzed by protests by transport groups in Southern Tagalog when the jeepney and tricycle drivers participated in the transport strike last March, Mitapo noted.

"The fare hike would be ineffective if oil deregulation remains because it would only be consumed by more oil price increases. What is needed is the junking of the oil deregulation law and the return of state control over the oil industry," he said.

Oil companies are expected to implement a new round of oil price increases in June.

Mitapo also called for the lowering of the prices of basic commodities and the increases in the wage of workers, pointing out that everyone, especially the basic sectors, are affected by the increase in petroleum products and the upcoming fare hike.

Malacañang has admitted that increases in the prices of commodities are also expected.

"The Cabinet cluster in Southern Tagalog calls on the newly elected congressmen to immediately act to end oil deregulation, stopping exploitation by the Big Three (Caltex, Petron, Shell) and the organizing of state ownership of Petron," Mitapo said. Clarice Gabriel, PDI Sanchaite Aspen Bureau

Nurses left behind work longer as exodus for abroad goes on

By Aquilino Zorilla
PDI Mindanao Bureau

GENERAL SANTOS CITY—The exodus of Filipino nurses abroad is affecting the normal operation of a government-run hospital here.

Dr. Benjamin Pagarigan, medical director of the City-operated Hospital (CH-I) here, told reporters that their remaining nurses working at the CH1 resigned after their applications for overseas employment were approved.

Pagarigan said four of the seven nurses were holding plum-like positions and the other three were contractual employees.

Pagarigan said due to the untimely departure of these nurses, their colleagues in the hospital were compelled to render longer working hours.

"Many of our nurses at the CH1 are now rendering 24-hour duty because of lack of manpower," Pagarigan noted.

He revealed that he already recommended to the Human Resource department of the city government the emergency hiring of nurses to fill the vacancies.

The city hospital, he said, badly needs nurses so as not to jeopardize the delivery of health and medical services to the patients.

Ninety percent of patients admitted to the CH1 are indigents.

The lure of lucrative employment abroad prompted the nurses to leave their jobs here.

Nurses, in both public and private hospitals here, are receiving an average of P9,000 to P10,000 monthly salary.

In foreign shores, nurses can earn as much as $1,25,000 monthly (or roughly many doctors here have enrolled in a nursing course.

"Soon, we will be experiencing not just shortage of nurses but including doctors if the situation continues," Pagarigan said.

Asians launch search for their own 'Idols'

"American Idol" show, which has spawned franchises and copycat versions of what is basically a karaoke contest with an interactive audience of millions.

In its latest season which ended last week, ethnic Asians like Filipino-American finalist Jasmine Trias and Hong Kong-born Jaded Hong, who was eliminated early but became an unlikely pop icon, boosted the show's appeal in the region.

"American Idol" is an amateur singing contest whose winners are chosen by mobile phone subscribers who send votes by text messaging after they hear the views of judges Simon Cowell, Randy Jackson and Paula Abdul.

Despite the fact that only US residents are allowed to vote, Asians have become devoted followers of the Fox Television show.

"It's unbelievable how many people watch it," Indriyana Susanah, Asian general manager of the show's distributor Fremantle Productions, told AFP. "It's like the (soccer) World Cup."

Inspirational

Susanah said it was the inspirational reality bits of the show that appealed to audiences worldwide. The latest winner is African-American singer Fantasia Barrino, a 19-year-old single mother.

When a 17-year-old Hawaii student of Filipino ancestry, Jasmine Trias, was booted off the talent show earlier this month, the Philippine government expressed disappointment and her shunned fans wept on live radio.

"Deep down, a lot of people aspire to be stars and celebrities and they like to see the journey, they can relate to them," Susanah said, adding that viewers identify with underdogs.

The previous "American Idol" season was won by pony-tailed Ruben Studdard.

The fact that even the untalented have managed to become stars through the show gives it an even wider appeal, Susanah said.

"I think the beauty of this program is you don't just find people who become heroes because they can sing, but also people who become heroes because they cannot sing," she said.

Will Hung, an engineering student in California of Hong Kong parentage, became the first contestant from the latest season to get a recording deal.

This despite the fact that he had been reported during the first round of auditions when he performed a tuneless and infantile rendition of Luis Miguel's hit "Bolero Mambo".

His recently released album, "Inspiration," included not only unpolished covers of popular songs as well as "Inspirational Thoughts" on perseverance, passion and being true to oneself.

Feel-good story

"The show is about making heroes out of somebody that would otherwise be unknown. It's a very feel-good story," Susanah said.

In Singapore, where viewers were allowed to vote, it managed to be flashed at the last hurdle of the series during "Asian Idol," fans expressed support for Hong even as the final rounds of the competition when he was no longer in contention.

Over 20 countries worldwide have developed local versions of the show, including Indonesia, India, Malaysia and Singapore.

"Indonesian Idol" is now in the elimination stages, drawing over 30,000 aspiring singers to auditions, with many citing their American counterparts as their inspiration.

"Malaysian Idol" drew 8,000 participants to the first round of auditions, which Susanah said was "a very good number for Malaysia."

In Singapore, auditions will be held in June 5 by broadcaster MediaCorp, which aired "American Idol" and decided to launch a local version due to popular demand.

"American Idol" drew an average of 100,000 viewers in Singapore each week, translating to 10 percent of the local population, beating other syndicated US television shows.

Thailand has had a number of local talent shows for years, but winners rarely become national stars or tabloid fodder.

In Japan, the land that invented karaoke, there is no plan to create a local version but a spokesperson for New Broadcasting Japan (Tbs) Japan said they may air "American Idol" as an undetermined date.

In Australia, "American Idol" regularly attracts more than a million viewers but does not figure in the nation's top 20 shows.

Australians have been far more enthusiastic about "Australian Idol," which captured the second largest audience in 2003. There were 3.3 million viewers during its final show—claimed as the largest television audience for a nonsporting event in Australian history. AFP

Yellow boxes may hold evidence of fraud

Turn to page A6

of votes for national candidates are in each province, city, special district and absentee voting center.

The election returns, or precinct tallies, will confirm—or, in case of cheating, contradict—the figures in the CoCs.

"These boxes will provide the evidence to counter the ghost votes fraud," Deputy Secretary General Emmanuel Almario told the hearings.

'What are they afraid of?'

Opposition Sen. Francis Escudero said he feared the administration coalition would not allow the ballot boxes to be opened.

"What are they afraid of?" he asked.

Senator Jose de Venecia, the effective chief lawyer of the losers, said the ballot boxes were safe and under tight security.

Touching 2,232, the ballot boxes were in the custody of the Senate and Congress armed with assault rifles brought them in the Batasan complex on Tuesday.

The boxes were brought in by military trucks under escort by the Special Action Force of the Philippine Marines (Pmc).

TV monitors

On arrival, the boxes were placed inside a cordoned-off area of the Batasan beach lobby. The 360-square meter enclosure is guarded at three sides with plywood. Chicken wire runs on one side, affording the public a view of the boxes.

The area is monitored at all times by closed-circuit television cameras.

A 24-hour security watch over the boxes is being provided by the Senate Security Bureau and by PNP Special Action Force.

The first batch of ballot boxes to arrive included several from conflict-ridden provinces, the Cordillera Autonomous Region and the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.

The other boxes, also under heavy guard, arrived later.

WEST FINALS

Garnett saves T'Wolves

BRYANT complains to an official about a call

MINNEAPOLIS—Kevin Garnett's carnival instinct was stronger than the Lakers' thrashing mark.

Garnett had 36 points and 19 rebounds, and the Minnesota Timberwolves needed elimination from the Western Conference finals with a 98-94 victory over Los Angeles in Game 5 Saturday night.

Latrell Sprewell scored 28 points and Fred Hoiberg added 14 for the Timberwolves, who prevented the Lakers from winning a potentially series-ending game for the first time since Game 5 of the 2000 NBA Finals.

Shaquille O'Neal and Kobe Bryant had more than 13 rebounds, but the Timberwolves avoided their first three-game losing streak of the season. A raucous home crowd cheered another dizzying performance by Garnett, who played every position and did not foul out 2:51 remains.

Garnett also hit five free throws in the final 2:04 as Minnesota held on to a small lead. Derek Fisher had a 3-point try at the buzzer to make the final score close.

Bryant scored 25 points, and Karl Malone and Derek Fisher added 17 apiece for the Lakers, who hold a 3-2 series lead with Game 6 in Los Angeles on Monday night.

Only seven teams in NBA history have overcome at least a 3-1 deficit to win a playoff series, and the Lakers have never blown such a lead.

Before finding out with 5.3 seconds left, O'Neal scored 17 points on just 11 shots.

It was a strange game all around for the Lakers, who never seemed to find their rhythm. Just the game—coach Phil Jackson even said his team was "giddy."

But the Lakers lost their bench late in the first half and all-around 2-17 nonexistent points by Minnesota. The Lakers fell behind 46-30 in the fourth quarter before scoring 20 straight points and earning control, taking in the crowd, but Walking hit a difficult jumper while being fouled by Bryant with 2:29 left. Garnett did the rest with his ball-handling and free throws.

Injured All-Star Gary Carroll didn't suit up for the Timberwolves, but Hoiberg and Phil Ely banged back-to-back jumpers with Garnett on the bench to make the final score close.

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GARNETT scales his way to 36 points and 19 rebounds.

Cabrera dislodges Rose in Volvo PGA

VIRGINIA WATER, England—Angel Cabrera shot a 4-under 68 Saturday to take a one-stroke lead over four golfers in the third round of the Volvo PGA Championship.

The lanky Argentine led Englishmen Justin Rose—the second-round leader—Bernhard Langer, South African's Darren Fichardt and Scotland's Scott Drummond.

Rose, who led after two rounds at the Montgomerie Course but at 8-1, scored a par 72. Hoggenmos carded a 70, while Fichardt and Drummond—carded 4-68s—had this.

Thomas Clarke is with 4-under-par 68-71, and the high-profile trio of Ernie Els, Nick Faldo and Thomas Bjorn share seventh, three shots back. Major Singh, ranked second, fell to 18th following a 71.

In Coming, Rose Teah, Michelle Kidd overcame a triple bogey to maintain a one-stroke lead over Swedish's Sandra Jonsson after three rounds of the Evening Classic.

Kidd and Jonsson each fired 3-under-par 70s at the $1-million event, moving the 42-year-old Americans to 13-under 203 after 54 holes, with Jonsson a single swing off her pace.

American Vicki Goetze-Ackerman a four shots back in third place with Scott Hoyer Mo Rhys-Ann Smith, another stroke back. AP, AFP

ELS in contention

What's the score on Asi?

BASKETBALL fans are taking umbrage at the authorities' failure to make a fast, firm and fair decision on the question of whether or not Phil superstar Asi Taulava of Talk 'N' Text Pats Filipino roots. Taulava's citizenship has been in limbo snagging on for years, but up to now nothing has been decided.

In 2000, the Bureau of Immigration had Taulava deported for his failure to prove his Filipino citizenship. Taulava had claimed he was half-Filipino and half-Tongan, saying his mother, Pauline Hausmann Mamoula Taulava, who was granted during the 80 hearing, was born in Ato Ahau, Hawaii, to Filipino while his father, Semisi Mitimaala, was born in Tonga.

According to the BI, not a single evidence, aside from his mother, came forward to claim who documents to him, stressing that "If indeed Pauline was born in Ato Ato, Hawaiian Taiwan (on July 13, 1946), there could still be living relatives there in the a very advanced age."

During the same hearing, Taulava Taulava presented a birth certificate showing her alleged Filipino lineage, that the BI debunked then-later, saying that Mrs. Pauline Taulava failed to prove that the NSO "Pauline Bermudez Hausmann" who was named in the certificate of her birth she submitted were one and the same person.

"Taulava needed more compelling and more credible evidence to back up his claim," said Allen Rivalo Yap, then the acting BI commissioner.

Last week, the National Bureau of Investigation said it received records from the United States Department of Homeland Security showing that Taulava's parents are permanent US residents. And contrary to the claim that Taulava's mother was born in Hawaii, the US records also apparently showed that Pauline Taulava was born in Nuku-Hihiva on July 13, 1946 in Tonga. As a result, Taulava could now face charges of misdirection of public documents and lose his right to play in the Philippine Basketball Association.

Lawyer Gary de Jesus, Taulava's counsel, said the charges should be filed in court if there are allegations of fraud.

Said Mr. Jesus (defendant) do-

what they want to do and we'll beat the shot in court," added Talk 'N' Text team manager Frankie Lim.

"That has been going on for years. Every time I played a big game, some thing like that comes up. The point is no," said Taulava, a 6-foot-10 behemoth who first dazzled local basketball fans in the Philippine Basketball League in 1998.

Aside from Taulava, there are at least 14 other Filipinos players who have been similarly investigated of instances of questionable documents. However, there are many other Filipinos players who are playing here because their papers are in order. In fact, a number of foreigners of Filipino descent—including the Philippine Department of Interior—among the players who have acquired DOJ confirmations are Tony Tuffy Cruz of Utah, Jeffrey Cornaso of Coca-Cola and Mick Pennisi and Jeffrey Cariaso of Red Bull Barako.

What's the real score on Asi Taulava?

If Taulava is guilty of falsification of public documents, he should be punished. The matter should not end there. Taulava to smoke his way out. But if Taulava is innocent, he is to be known publicly to exonerate him.

My heart bleeds for Asi Taulava. He is not to blame because he is more of a victim in the play. There people who purported his papers are the ones who goofed on him.

* * *

SPARKS NOTES: I have not been going to big-time drafters for the last several months, but I am glad to know that Chris is now a prohibitive of outrightning scientists all over Metro Manila during the most active cockpits are the popular Rodgers Mega Cockpit, the Lou Brian Coliseum, the Exotic Sports Center, the Mandaluyong Coliseum, and the Smart Gay Cockpit where my former fencing bout colleagues managed agent Cookie of the Sun

Letran tossers outlast Lyceum

LEROY THOMSON
(Lyceum injury)

12:30 p.—PBA vs. San Sebastian
Lucas—Lyceum vs. UST

BOSCELLO was gun-wracked by unpredictable effort usually blowing a two-score lead. Letran found enough energy to close out an underdog Lyceum side at 25-by-set clothes, 20-22, 20-25, 22-20, 25-20, 15-25, 15-12, yesterday to open its title bid in the inaugural staging of the Shakey's Category off to a good start at the Lyceum Gym.

With the title on contrail at 12, Jessie Mabe Sotomayor and Gerardo Almonte provided the crucial hits and the Knights' defense found Lyceum's Mario Antolin's bid to stretch with Crystal Montecillo which Opie turned a stopping-and a ball from.

"Any crucial in game we always stay calm even down and trying to not panic we executed their defense in the net and in the back we created a," said letran coach Emerito Bautista, who also coached the Letran Knights to its UAAP title in 1986.

Rabbit Philippine Olympic Committee (POC) president Cielo Dizon, Shakey's owners and former PBA commissioner Leo Prudente graced Channel 2 historic Cuneta Pilipinas. Asia-powerful opening of the event sponsored by Shakey's and organized by Sports Vision Management Group Inc.

Despite trailing in the early goings of the opening sets, Letran refused to let up, pumping it's crossovers and a right defense to throw Lyceum's power-hitting duo of Baron and Dodds Cruz and two to a crucial standings we-set lead.

The Knights then nearly wrapup their work of Lyceum, grabbing on a four-point deficit to take a 13-10 lead in the third frame. But Lyceum closed out the set by scoring six straight of the last 11 points to stay alive.

The replacement Bemo then dominated the fourth set with Beverly Bolo and Jenny Rose Garcia raining change and forcing the decider.

The Knights went on a 6-2 run in the fifth set with Bautista's crosscourt hitting a Sheryl swap smashes. But Lyceum battled back to tie the count at 12.

Pressure scored on a spike while Antonette added another from the wing to post Letran up, 2-1.

Bautista, seven down by having to play almost the entire match, tried to keep her team alive but her smash error in the opinion the defense of Fernando and Rhoanne Bueno to allow the Knights to remove the win.

JOHN Rackhem Jarin (left) of Lyceum blocks the spike of Bangladesh Pasadena of Letran during their match yesterday at the Lyceum gym.

Corteza foils . . .

(From page 1)

ona Jr. if thought I wasn't going to win when Dennis had the 10-6 lead. But with the pressure off me, all my shots went in," said the Chevrolet-backed veteran.

Down by four points, Corteza patiently worked himself into contention as luck again ran out on Buenaventura.

After knocking down five balls on his heels on the 22nd stack, Buenaventura failed to split any on the 23rd, allowing Corteza to grab the lead for good with scores of 12-11.

Corteza finished after taking an early 4-1 lead, allowing Buenaventura to score consecutive scores in the ninth, 11th and 13th inch on the way to the 16-point.

Buenaventura and Cortez forged the all-Filipino showdown for the championship by virtue in the day with identical 11-9 scores over three respective wins.

Bunags ousted 13-year-old Tennessee prodigy Wu Chen Ching while DeVilla, a fourth-seed from Ginoo golf medalist Jeffrey Cruz, demolished Jeong Young Hun.

Corteza had posted the runaway's biggest upset by eliminating Hong-Ky champion Hiroshi Tomi Tevers in the quarterfinals early in the day. Buenaventura needed all the breaks to dispatch Wu in the semis.

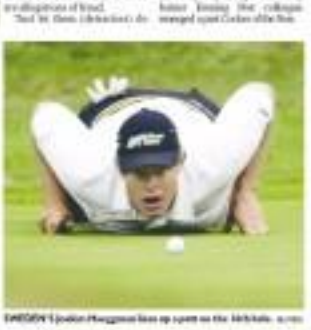
Toms surges ahead by 7 shots at St. Jude

MEMPHIS, Tennessee—David Toms enjoyed another big round Saturday and has opened a commanding seven-shot lead after the third round of the PGA St. Jude Classic.

Toms, who captured this event last year with a three-shot victory over Nick Price, fashioned three-of-Vaughn Taylor breaking into fourth-final round.

Taylor entered the day and one shot behind Toms but could not keep pace as he shot an over-par 71 to move to 11-under-213 overall. Brian Gay is third, eight strokes back.

A former PGA Champion and the highest-ranked player in the field at 30th, Toms has been dogged by a rather lukey Thursday. AFP



EMOTION! Ignacio Phaggnose loses up a putt on the 16th hole.

GMA allies control canvass committee

From page A1

Rep. Nereus Acosta, said he would ask Speaker Jose de Venecia on this today to justify the composition of the House panel.

"I will put it on record that nine of them campaigned for ERM," Escudero said, contending that the dominance of pro-administration lawmakers gave President Macapagal-Arroyo a stranglehold on the committee.

"They will just canvass us," said the Sorsogon congressman, adding that the pro-Macapagal legislators would likely use their numerical superiority to block every opposition challenge during the canvass.

Mr. Macapagal's party says she won over Mr. J. 1.1 million votes over Fpe. The senior's camp says he was the winner also by about one million votes.

Neither side could predict how long the canvass would last but De Venecia said last night completing it "in 15 days would be ideal."

Administration defenders have insisted that the failure of Congress to proclaim a winner by June 30—when the Macapagal's tenure ends...could create a power vacuum and spark military adventurism.

Heavy security

Troops have thrown a tight security net around the Batasan, ready to smash violent protests, after police arrested a supposed member of the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) in the declared summer.

De Venecia yesterday named 11 regular members to represent the House in the canvassing committee, a majority of whom belong to the administration camp and few from the opposition.

The Senate contingent is made up of six allies of Mr. Macapagal and five opposition members.

The canvassers

Leading the House panel are Iligan Speaker Fuad Gumbar (Lone, Iloilo City) and Rep. Florencio Abad (2d District) as chair and vice chair, respectively.

The members from the administration bloc are Representatives Constantino Jaraula Cuhan, Gregorio de Dio (Qty), Antonio Edmundo Barbosa (2d Division, Samar), Gregorio Ingeles (Lone, Davao City), Antonio Rodolfo Cuhan, Bonito Jose), Arthur Defensor (Lone, Iloilo), Antonio Garcia Galan, Cebu City) and Marcelino Libanan (3rd, Eastern Samar).

Representing the opposition are Senators Pimentel, Angara and Rep. Kim Bernardo Lobin (party-list group Cibac).

On the Senate majority panel are Senate President Pro Tempore Juan Ponce Enrile (Deputy Leader Francisco Pangilinan) and Senators Juliet Ramos, Manuel Villar, Ralph Recto and Ramon Magsaysay Jr.

The Senate minority panel is made up of Aquilino Pimentel Jr., Edgardo Angara, Vicente Sotto III, Sergio Osmeña III and Jinggoy Ejercito Estrada.

Rules denounced

The canvass committee's final report on the results of its tabulation will be submitted to the Secretary of the joint Congress, which will then proclaim the winner of the presidential and vice presidential contests.

The opposition is also moaning about the rules.

"It's designed to railroad the proclamation of GMA," Pimentel said, adding that the rules unintended the Commission "because there's no introduction safeguards."

Pimentel said he never observed such an unconstitutional proclamation," Angara said. They "flatly contradict the main aim of the canvass, which is to ascertain the validity and veracity of election returns."

But the opposition is moving over spilled milk, having taken part in the deliberations that adopted them.

Fair and transparent

Senate President Franklin Drilon defended the rules as to allowing "fairness, transparency and expeditiency."

Pangilinan dismissed as 'frivolous' claims that Congress would railroad the proclamation of the winner.

"If the joint week of lengthy debates on the proposed rules it was indications, if indeed there has been any railroading, it has been exactly the other way," Pangilinan said.

Ground President Joseph Estrada appealed for unity.

"I appeal to our political leaders, whether they are from the administration or the opposition, to let democracy take its course," he said in a statement. "While I identify with the interests of the opposition, I somewhere urge them to seek redress within the bounds of law."

Fear of unrest

The longer the vote count drags on, the greater the chances of unrest or a constitutional crisis if no new government is in place by June 30, analysts said.

Aaron del Castillo, managing director of First Grade Holdings, said: "The delay in the counting of the votes will hold the country hostage in the next few weeks."

The delay has drawn up a tentative list of 11 House election

AH OFFICIAL of the House of Representatives inspects ballot boxes containing the election returns. The canvassing of the presidential election starts today

Antonio Nakpil

members for the canvassing panel. They are: Representatives Orlando Fua (1st, Catanduanes), Prospero Pichay Jr. (Lone, Surigao del Sur), Lloyd Macarious Lubon, Cebu), Mauricio Domogan (Lone, Baguio City), Erlpe Mabasa (Lone, Capiz), Leyte), Fred Lanete (LD Capiz).

Salvador Espina Jr. (NPC, Bulacan), Juliette Nisce Mayor, Camarines Sur), Rene Velarde (party-list group Bayan), Edgar Valdez (party-list group Apec), Samar Ortega-Ezpeleta (party-list group Bayan Muna) and Agapito Aquino (LDP, Makati).

Pimentel said the Senate minority had designated the "alternates" to be Senators Tessie Aquino Oreta, Gregorio "Gringo" Honasan, legislator Ethelyn Dilangalen, Interim Sens. JV Bautista and other party-list representatives.

"These are known committee members and legal luminaries with a track record of honesty," De Venecia said of his team.

Magtanggol said the panel reflected the political reality in the House.

"So they were nine members for 193 and two for LAKAS" Magtanggol added.

Of the 235 members of the House, up to 190 members are identified with the administration.

The 200-strong bar signaled to plan to question at least 115 of the 154 GoCs Congress will tabulate.

Votes for Poe in the 15 GoCs will "definitely" overturn whatever lead Mr. Macapagal has posted in other areas, Estrada said.

Tedious process

At today's session, Drilon and De Venecia will start opening the padlocked ballot boxes containing the GoCs in what is expected to be a very tedious process.

Nachura said that this would involve describing minute details, like the serial numbers of the padlock, the appearance of the ballot box, the condition of the envelope containing the CoC and the statement of votes per municipality, and the appearance of the CoC itself.

After the 15 ballot boxes are opened, the job of opening the others could be delegated to other officials.

The GoCs will then be turned over to the canvassing committee for the tabulation of the results.

Huge boards have been installed outside the Batasan hall so that the public could follow the count.

Nachura stressed that the rules provide that, if there were alterations or erasures in the GoCs, any camp could request that the election returns be looked into to get the correct figures.

Any move to go down to the election returns or precinct tallies will, however, be subject to a committee vote.

"The CoC will be left intact. Nobody will read the results anymore," Nachura said.

Debate shifts to opening of election returns

From page A1

senior title to support its claim.

"If they want to show that the election returns have been tampered with, they have to file a case before the Presidential Electoral Tribunal ... just like what Ms. Imelda Dolmo-Santiago did in 2004," Abakulimod said as a news conference in Quezon City.

He said it is clear that Congress can't look at the ERs, according to Drilon.

"The statement of election returns cannot be made if the three conditions are present," Drilon said in a phone interview.

He was referring to Section 17 of the canvass rules which says that Congress can count the votes as they appear in the ERs submitted to it, "when it appears that any certification of canvass or supporting statement of votes by precinct

He said questioning GoCs during the canvassing would result in a full-blown trial, which would "drag the canvassing" from the tenders and kill the election official (unless losers broke).

"If they want to do that, it only shows that they do not have evidence of fraud, it means they are faking for evidence," he said.

Pimentel disagreed with Abakulimod. "I don't give a hoot for Mr. Makulin, (it's) optimal," Pimentel said.

Three conditions

The newly approved rules for the canvassing of votes allow Congress to count the ERs when nothing the actual number of votes cast for the candidates of the two top posts in the country.

The common rules and Republic Act No. 7166—the Act Providing for Synchronized National and Local Elections and for Electoral Reforms—provide that Congress can look at the ERs, according to Drilon.

"The statement of election returns can only be made if the three conditions are present," Drilon said in a phone interview.

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Allocation list

Opposition Sen. Edgardo Angara said the motion by Congress had asked the Commission on Elections to provide it with an "allocation list" or a master list of all the election forms containing details, including their destinations.

Reciting the debate on the proposed canvass rules, Angara pushed for Congress to ask the Comelec for the allocation so the opposition could see if during the canvass, the Congress decided to search the list.

"We expect the Comelec to provide us the list because it is a public document and it is important for a credible canvass," Angara said.

Pimentel had said that examining 16 to 15 GoCs was not expected to delay the canvass.

But Abakulimod said looking at the ERs would immensely delay the proceedings. Besides, it is against the law, he said.

He said it would take Congress "14 years to complete the canvassing if it allowed the examination of all ERs for just 30 minutes each.

"If they're going to ask for the circulation of some GoCs, we have enrolled the services of Vicky Cruz, who used to be the National Board of Canvassers (for senatorial candidates) to the Philippine International Convention Center, the actual canvass of votes, and she says provided the political party is ok," he said.

"Compared to the copies that we have and their (allegations), I think ours will have more weight in terms of evidence," the lawyer said.

Abakulimod said the opposition shouldn't have questioned the GoCs during the session hall canvass.

He said Poe himself recognized the authenticity of the canvass when he raised the hands of the five winning KNP senatorial candidates, who were declared winners on the basis of the same GoCs.

K-4 count

"Their failure to raise the issue then weakens their position although they are not pre-empted," Abakulimod said.

Lawyers of the administration E-1 coalition again presented yesterday certified true copies of 376 GoCs that showed Mr. Macapagal getting a total of 12,858,800 votes, giving her a lead of 1,114,818 votes over Poe who had 11,740,980 votes.

Abakulimod expressed confidence that Congress would uphold certain decisions of the canvass, arguing that it's ahead of the June 30 turnover deadline.

Malacañang is counting on the Lower House leaders' commitment to finish the counting within two to three weeks. Mr. Macapagal's current term expires on June 30.

Presidential spokesperson Ignacio Bunye brushed aside the opposition's fear of extending the presidential proclamation, saying that the rules for the canvassing of votes were approved by the majority of lawmakers after two days of debate.

"That's how democracy works—the majority rules and that is why the system desired by the majority was adopted. But the observations of the opposition were taken into consideration," said Bunye on radio today.

Bunye, however, insisted the opposition that Congress would not ignore the opposition's observations and objections. With a report from Ed Cabuenas in Iligan

Jollibee president named World Entrepreneur of the Year

From page A3

cent of the company.

Retaining 40 percent is also the domestic fast-food market share that Jollibee commands.

'Solid foundations'

Ernst & Young chair James Turley said in a statement: "These awards are about celebrating global entrepreneurship and recognizing successful leaders who are motivated. Tony's story is a truly inspirational one—in both these senses."

"Tony's success is due to his ability to innovate, to look ahead, and build an exceptional brand," added Gregory Ochoco, EOY global director.

"1,000,000 is a success story based on solid foundations, not a mirror that will burn itself out," noted Howard Stevenson, professor of Entrepreneurship at Harvard Business School and chair of the judging panel.

Jollibee posted a profit of P1.26 billion last year, 21 percent more than the P1.04 billion it recorded in 2002, while total earnings neared P27 billion—for which Tan Caktiong was named Man of the Year by the Management Association of the Philippines.

Modest beginnings

The WEOY organizers hailed the food company's growth from an ice cream parlor in 1975 to a leading fast-food restaurants with almost 1,000 outlets in the Philippines and viewed as "an unofficial measure of the health of the entire Filipino economy."

Starting in 1975 as a two-branch ice cream parlor, Jollibee broke the P100-million sales mark in 1984, joining the Top 500 Philippine Corporations. Five years later, it broke the P1-billion sales mark.

In 1993, Jollibee became the first food service company to be listed in the Philippine Stock Exchange. The following year, it was ranked as one of Asia's leading companies by the Far Eastern Economic Review. The Asian Business Magazine named it Employer of the Year in 1996 and Most Admired Company in the Philippines in 2000.

Jollibee employs 30,000 people in almost 1,000 outlets in seven countries, including the United States (in California alone) and China. Locally, it has branches in almost all provinces, except Sulu, Basilan, Tawi-Tawi and Batanes.

Tan Caktiong has also diversified personal business endeavors. In 1986, he and Jollibee was awarded big expansion to Vietnam—where it already has 4 stores—and might introduce the company's Chowking brand in Indonesia. The Indian market was also being eyed on account of the huge population there, he said.

Jollibee also has stores in Brunei and Hong Kong. Tan Caktiong and the company recently purchased China's leading fast-food chain, Yonghe King, and was eyeing Europe for this brand.

Winners all

HSY Foundation's strategic partner organizers for HSY Philippines are The Business Association of the Philippines, Department of Trade and Industry, Philippine Stock Exchange and the University of the Philippines College of Business Administration. The Philippine team has also been co-sponsored by CNN International, Air France, San Miguel Corp. and Swisscom World.

Tan Caktiong's coveted citation followers that of another Filipino businessman, Enrique Ablaza Jr., president and chief executive officer of Globe Telecom Inc., who was recently named Asia Business Leader of the Year and, early this week, given the CEO of Closer turned in the Asia Business Leader Summit 2004 in Shanghai, China.

MEOY 2003 was Saroyana Manila founder and chair of Isetan Touch Infosys Technologies Ltd. Other previous winners were Stefan Ellenauer, president and CEO of BASELAR AG in Germany (2002), and Rodino Ocampo della Paz, president, chair, and group CEO of Inoo Group in 2001. Reports from Elizabeth L. Sanchez, Business; and Fe Zamora

MONDAY, MAY 31, 2004 PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER B1

BUSINESS

FedEx to finalize $450-M deal with Clark

By Clarissa S. Batino

FEDERAL Express, one of the world's biggest cargo carriers, will be sending representatives to the Philippines on Wednesday to finalize its long-term lease contract with Clark International Airport Corp.

FedEx is building its $450-million regional hub at the former US military base.

The move followed the executive order of then Chairman Leonardo Perez to snatch the deal from the Philippines even after FedEx had decided last month to stay in the country, according to sources.

A memorandum of understanding had been forged last month by FedEx and CIAC for the 25-year lease of some 58 hectares within the Clark economic zone.

The cargo carrier will relocate its regional hub to Clark once its contract with the Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority expires in 2007. Clark authorities estimated FedEx's investment to reach at least $450 million.

"The deal with FedEx would be concluded this Wednesday, June 2. We are finalizing the extent of the lot to be leased. There are some concerns like some portions of the property FedEx wanted are already being used by other lessees," said a Clark airport official.

FedEx officials from Memphis, Tennessee, will be arriving to settle outstanding issues on the site.

Chinese transport officials came to the Philippines recently to see if they could still entice FedEx to put up its regional facility within the $4-billion joint airport in Guangzhou, China.

"FedEx officials don't want to announce anything yet until the lease contract with Clark is finalized because the Chinese were still trying to woo the deal. Some Chinese officials went here recently but there is no turning back for FedEx," said a Clark airport official.

To meet the 2007 relocation timetable, the freight carrier has to start building the hub by October 2005.

Sources said FedEx chose the Philippines over China because the latter brought up restrictions that the US freight carrier did not want to deal with.

Subic had been FedEx's hub during the past eight years. But limitations of Subic in terms of space for expansion prompted the US carrier to consider moving to China. Two aircraft of FedEx crashed into the Subic waters because of runway misadventures.

FedEx's decision to return to Asia-Pacific hub in the Philippines would not only give the government millions of pesos in revenue yearly from its lease arrangement as well as from taxes but also create employment opportunities.

Subic Bay became FedEx's regional hub in September 1995 where it could connect with 10 key Asian cities. The facility, besides overnight delivery to the US Pilot Court from Penang, Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Manila and Ho Chi Minh Town.

For a smooth transition, the

FEDEX, B2

Rules on VAT exemption of lawyers, doctors OKd

By Michelle V. Reyes

THE DEPARTMENT of Finance has approved the revenue regulation providing the guidelines on the exemption of lawyers and doctors from the value-added tax.

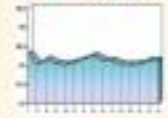
RR 7-2004, which was drawn up by the Bureau of Internal Revenue, clarifies the coverage of the law providing VAT exemption to services rendered by professionals. The law exempting doctors and lawyers from the VAT took effect in January this year.

Under the revenue regulations, medical and legal services rendered by doctors and lawyers shall be exempt from the 10-percent VAT. The exemption includes partnerships put up by lawyers to provide legal services.

Before the revenue regulations was issued, the government was also unclear whether the VAT exemption should also cover legal services rendered by partnerships or should it

PAGE B2

Currencies



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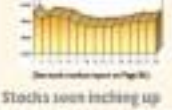

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INTERCOOL

BOI to improve perks for priority industries

By Ronnel W Domingo

THE BOARD of Investments is moving for the enhancement of the investor packages granted to the priority business activities to attract more investments, according to Trade Undersecretary Elmer C. Hernandez.

Fiscal and non-fiscal incentives offered in the 2004 Investment Priorities Plan include income tax holidays, tax credits, exemption from taxes and duties on imported spare parts and supplies.

Hernandez, who is also BOI managing head, said the sectors covered were infrastructure, automotive, electronics, mining and information technology.

The BOI had identified these sectors as priority investment areas since they had the best investment prospects and competitive advantages.

Hernandez said the infrastructure sector was top priority because of the need to link manufacturing and production facilities, especially those in the provinces, to their markets.

The official said the BOI wanted infrastructure projects that would cover less developed areas in the country—such as power, roads and port development projects—as qualify for incentives.

"Logistics facilities are now given special attention since these are necessary if investments are to be encouraged in the countryside," he said.

Further, Hernandez said there were opportunities in the automotive sector that could attract foreign investors and make the country their production hub for specific models.

Recently, Japan's Mitsubishi Motors Corp. announced its final exit from its assembly venture with Mitsubishi Motors Philippines Corp. (MMPC) after failing to produce a new model solely for the country.

Mitsubishi's decision was partly due to the expanded coverage of the incentive package under the government's automotive export program.

Also, additional investors are being considered for the electronics industry, which continues to be the country's top dollar earner and which is seen to grow further parallel to global trends.

On mining, the government has encouraged foreign firms to go into partnership with local companies to make them eligible for incentives.

Reports from the private sector say that since the mining industry was reenabled, the country could export an estimated $7.5 billion in mineral investments.

Finally, the government is upbeat on promoting the country as a choice destination for outsourced services, especially call center operations.

Trade Secretary Cesar V. Purisima had said call center exports were expected to double by the end of the year to 40,000 users and again next year to 80,000 users.

Data from the Department of Trade and Industry show that investments in the information technology sector posted a 229-percent growth to P6.42 billion in 2000. Of the amount, 69 percent or P4.46 billion accounted for investments in call centers.

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MINDANAWORLD

Joji Ilagan-Ikan

AT THE Asia Pacific Maritime Summit last March 24, 2004 in Singapore, it was underscored that Asian countries have to upgrade their ports so as to accommodate mega container ships. One of the speakers, an expert on maritime trade at the National University of Singapore, revealed that the growth of global trade has shifted from Europe to the Asia Pacific.

He also cited China's increasing role as a productive base for exports, the growing economic integration of India and other developing Asian countries, and the increasing trade within East Asia as the factors for a "dramatic regional outlook." Another summit resource person, Singapore Transport Minister Yeo Cheow Tong, advises Asian planners to anticipate mega container ships with a capacity of more than 8,000 twenty-foot equivalent units (TEUs), which currently make up about 20 percent of the tonnage on order for delivery in 2006. (TEU, 8/25/04)

Those people were giving a "heads-up" to us folks in Mindanao, as we are, by virtue of the Philippines' geographic location, users of the Asia Pacific. Let us take this challenge and start shaping up our own plans as a response to these developments. Already our Asian neighbors are talking about mega containerization while Mindanao has not even achieved full containerization. Talk about being at the tail end!

Nonetheless, Mindanao's shipping "movers," Lapanday, Del Monte, Dole, Philippine Foremost Milling Corp., Nestle, Universal Robina Corp., Coca-Cola Bottlers Phils., Inc., Concepcion Industries, Inc., Monterey Foods Corp., Pilmico-Foods Corp., Cargill Philippines, Inc., Sarangani Agricultural Company, Inc., Sumifru (Philippines) Corporation, Tagum Agricultural Development Company, Inc., Tagum Agricultural Development Company, Inc., Tagum Agricultural Development Company, Inc.,

Wack Wack 'bawas'

BENJAMIN Abalos may have escaped impeachment over alleged "jueteng bonus" (literally, acid-subtract) rice pudding irregularities, but it looks like the chair of the Commission on Elections may not be so lucky over at the Wack Wack Golf and Country Club, over whose board he also presides.

A petition is making the rounds among the members of the club asking the abovementioned board to resign but not before rescinding their decision to penalize long William Gotchalian.

Gotchalian had originally been recommended for expulsion for having a fellow golfer member with a club, but somehow Abalos managed to prevail upon the board to reduce the penalty to two and a half years' suspension.

Now, after only six months, the suit-specific, sensible Gonzalez chief has somehow gotten the board to altogether cut the sentence and allow Gotchalian, who has a reputation of being a quiet ass hater to occasional polished VIP golfers, to show his face at the club and play again.

The unchartable district from the club is that Abalos apparently thinks he is still the unchallenger boy he once was—the former Comelec chief seemed his very thorough college courtesy of "Wack Wack—is being rude on his appeal like Gotchalian.

In defense, a pained Abalos wrote an open letter to the Wack Wack members to explain the Gotchalian affair.

In any case, the anti-Abalos ousted-resign petition appears to have been mid-tripped, considering that the club will elect a new board next month.

The betting among the club hecklers is that Abalos and his "Wack Wack bawas" scam will no longer work come next.

Cabinet seat

AND SPEAKING of Wack Wack, the object of pleas is long William Gotchalian's golf-caring, cigarette-puffing banker Gregorio Yu, has just been appointed chair of Cats Motors, the Mercedes Benz dealer in Ortigas and The Fort.

In recognition of its outdated marketing pressures, Cats, instead of long-time auto-biz dealer Commercial Motors Corp., has been appointed by the Germans to give the local media a preview of the "new" SLK roadster on June 8.

It is not immediately clear if the SLK roadster ordered is would be the second generation, 2005-model car machine that would only be available to European and American markets come September.

Price war

THE DETECTIVES hard partners of Priceliman have hired Pamaphanan and Arnaldo to conduct an internal audit of the warehouse club, separate from the usual work done by external auditor SGV.

The new audit findings will be presented to visiting Priceliman vice chair James Cahill, who will open Priceliman's fourth Philippine branch next week.

Heard through the grapevine

THE ESTATE of Enrique Zobel Dee 10 days, or up to last Thursday, after the death of the tycoon, is the for a probate of the Zobel will but a preliminary check with both the Calamayan (Batangas) and Montalban regional trial courts last week showed that none had yet been filed.

In addition to his factoids in Batangas and home in Alabang, the billionaire was known to have real estate holdings in Spain, Hawaii and California, to Tony Aberion.

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Fedex to finalize . . .

Passenger B1

cargo carrier plans to relocate two years before the country's Subic expires. At the same time, the DC freight carrier would scale down gradually its operations in Cebu.

FedEx a representative locally by Air Freight 2100 of the Lina Group of Companies, air freight is the sole licensee of FedEx in the Philippines.

FedEx started operations in Mindanao in 1995 with only 14 small aircraft. Since then, FedEx had acquired the world's largest all-cargo fleet, consisting of Boeing, McDonnell Douglas, and Airbus aircraft.

The US firm handles 3.5 million packages nightly, employs more than 260,000 people, and serves some 200 countries. FedEx plans to expand operations to making 390 trips around the earth on a day.

SRA expects record sugar production this year

By Christine A. Caylao

THE GOVERNMENT is expecting a bumper harvest of sugar this cropping year ending August following continental expansion areas planted to high-yielding sugar variety.

Based on preliminary production reports, sugar harvest this cropping year will likely break a 10-year record of 2.16 million metric tons achieved last cropping year, the Sugar Regulatory Administration said.

The SRA also showed that sugar production in the first eight months of the current cropping year already surpassed the 2 million metric ton mark.

Given the eight-month production performance, the SRA said this year's harvest could easily surpass the 10-year record.

From September 2003 to April 2004, the SRA placed the national sugar output at about 2.06 million metric tons (MT) or higher by 4.4 percent than year ago figure of 1.97 million MT.

SRA Administrator James Christopher Lokniyo said the production growth could be attributed to the conclusions expansion of areas planted to high-yielding sugar varieties. This, he said, had significantly improved productivity.

From only 387,369 hectares in the previous crop year, the national sugar production area increased to 397,600 hectares this year.

Productivity, as measured by the cane tons yield per hectare, improved from 105.13 MT/hectare of raw sugar in the last crop year to 113.88 tons during the current cropping season.

As to sugar cane milled sugar production grew 5.1 percent to 26.72 million 50 kilogram bags in the September to April period this cropping season from 16.23 million bags last crop year.

Production is expected to further pick up in the coming months as sugar prices at the mills started perking up.

Agriculture officer in charge (OIC) and concurrent National Food Authority (NFA) administrator Arthur C. Yap said the agency's interventions through its rice procurement helped prop up the prices of the commodity.

According to the production control and regulation office of the SRA, the industry price of "A" or domestic sugar improved from a low of P665.42/bag in February to P697.29 a bag in March and finally to P703.60 a bag in April.

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QUESTIONS OF POLICIES

Bienvenido C. Gutierrez

THE BUREAU of Internal Revenue boasted recently that tax collections were up. This was not unexpectedly due to any increase in the efficiency of the collectors. I am sure that, for a large extent, the credit of the hike in the withholding tax on tax incentives agents and brokers (realtors) and dentists, among others, from 15 to 15 percent.

The new rate is applied to those with gross earnings of at least P720,000 a year. Those earning less are still subject to the old rate. But if you claim you are subject to the old rate, your gross earnings are deducted to support your claim. If you are subject to the new rate, but have an, your gross earnings drop below the P720,000 threshold, you also have to file an affidavit in order to be subject to the old rate. The BIR does not believe you unless and until you say it in the form of a sworn affidavit.

A long time ago, there was no withholding tax. You paid your income tax in one lump sum when you filed your return every April. The withholding plan was introduced to allow paying the income tax in small, easy installments. The taxpayer deducted the withheld amount from the income tax liability when the return was filed every April.

For the government, the withholding plan smoothens the cash flow instead of being loaded in April, the cash is spread evenly throughout the year.

I remember: I had been working for a salary for a few years when the withholding plan was first introduced about 30 years ago. My office mates and I extended the idea. We did not mind paying income taxes in advance since the installments were small.

Today things are a lot different, especially in the income agent or broker. The withholding system there was born to (a) the withholding tax is computed on gross income, and (b) the income tax imposed (which the withholding tax is credited) is computed on net taxable income (gross income less deductible expenses).

Let us take an individual insurance agent or broker who pays income tax on a sliding scale. Assuming gross commissions earnings of P60,000 a month or P720,000 a year, the withholding tax under the new rate is P9,000 a month or P108,000 a year. In order to be liable to pay P108,000 in income taxes, the agent or broker has to have a net taxable income of P345,000. This is 47 percent of the gross income of P720,000. Even if the tax examiner disallows certain operating expenses claimed by the agent in his return, the net taxable income can never be P345,000, or 47 percent of gross income.

The insurance agent or broker, who pays 15 percent tax on net taxable income, is not much better off. In order to be liable to pay P108,00 in income tax, he has to show a net taxable income of P600,000. This is 83 percent of gross income of P720,000, or a net operating expense of 17 percent. These figures are simply impossible to attain in reality how will the BIR expect to collect the tax?

Even under the old 10 percent tax, the figures above will not substantially change.

No matter how you slice it, the withheld amount is always larger than the actual tax liability. It may then that the withholding tax is overkiller to income tax liabilities.

Of course, the excess is refundable, or so they say. In order to get a refund, the agent or broker must send in a written request within two years from the filing of the return. Otherwise, he loses the excess withholding forever. In fact, some agents I know do not even bother to file a request for a refund. If the agent does file a request, it will take almost forever to get the refund. And when he finally gets the good news from BIR, he is told to push up the refund to the next year.

Oh, the agent or broker can indicate in the return that the excess withholding should be applied to future income tax liabilities. The excess amount will then keep piling up. The amount is practically useless. It is no asset to the books, if it is lost, but you cannot spend it or borrow money on it. BIR must be holding on to billions upon billions of these unapplied and "outstanding" assets.

The withholding tax system has to be thoroughly reviewed. The system has become unjust, if not illegal, onerous.

Americans, Chinese, Malaysians

It feels a nothing like a short trip abroad and a chance to read the economic and business news elsewhere to give one a wider perspective on our economy's current situation. It's always interesting to see what's happening in the US economy given its very strong linkage to our own, and interestingly, the very strong similarity in the problems both economies face today. I also always find a perspective particularly to read the local press and economic news from our neighbors, with whom comparisons are inevitable.

Oil prices and Americans

A recent item in the New York Times pointed to three major challenges confronting the US economy: high budget deficits, staggering international debt, and dramatic oil price increases. A fourth item not mentioned specifically in that article is the growing rate of unemployment in spite of impressive levels of job generation. Sound familiar? There could have very well been a description of the Philippines' own current economic challenges.

The Times analyst observed that the US economy has managed to thrive in spite of the first two challenges, and presumably even with the fourth. But he expressed some concern that Americans may be less able to handle the dramatic increase in oil prices inflicted on all of us by the Opec, given that Americans oil imports have increased only 20% from its pre-Iraq war levels. Partly to blame for this is the Americans' current love affair with gas-guzzling sport utility vehicles or SUVs, and the near-extinction of the fuel efficient subcompacts (e.g. the Chevy Vegas, Ford Pintos and AMC Gremlins) that the 1970s oil crisis made very popular for a while.

I got a minor shock upon our return the other day to discover that the cost of P20/kg. up our city's fuel tank has breached the P900 mark. But then I remembered that regular gasoline was selling for about $2.00 a gallon in the

NO FREE LUNCH

Cielito F. Habito

Post Cancun a week ago, whereas the bar cries I took notice. Americans were only paying half of that. The message? That's blame the oil companies or oil industry deregulation for our recent oil price increases. Blame the Opec for that. But there seems to be one little mystery here: didn't they say last year that American control over Iraq and its vast supplies of oil would lead to cheaper petroleum? What happened?

Chinese cellphones

Another item that caught my eye, this time in a Malaysian paper, lamented that China's mobile phone users now exceed the entire US population, with subscriptions rising to 206 million last month. An additional 5.4 million new accounts were opened in April alone, in a country where cellphone users are growing at the rate of 1 per every second.

What was interesting about the article was its quote of an analyst who observed that still only one out of five Chinese has a cellphone account, and that there is no guarantee that the growth will be to much levels similar to—gasp!—the Philippines. On this score, we are indeed ahead of the Chinese, with one out of four Filipinos routinely owning a cellphone. Still, the article observed that profitability among Chinese carriers is falling as the usage levels there tend to be lower than elsewhere. Is that because they haven't taken as to our messaging this way are Filipinos here? Maybe it has something to do with the greater affinity of texting in Chinese script?

As for Americans, who are still in the throes Agrao let us rest, ting is concerned, it is taking television programs like American Idol (and rating wars therein excited for them) to discover text messaging...and for American mobile carriers to realize how much money there is to be here. With the reported 45 million voters cast in the program's final round, the prizes went to the new American Idol would be pauses compared to what the phone companies and their partners must have made from the program. Our own TV networks and phone companies have already learned this for some time, and this has explained why the

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Tanduay sees P450-M net profit this year

LEADING rum maker Tanduay Holdings Inc., a unit of the Lucio Tan group, expects to chalk up P450 million in net profit this year or about 50 percent better than a year ago, on volume growth fueled by an aug consumers spending.

Tanduay president Wilson Tieng told stockholders during their annual meeting Friday that the P1.11-billion net profit posted in the first quarter could be replicated in the last three quarters.

Newsbreak, Tanduay's chief financial officer, said the company would post P400-P450 million in net earnings on the back of a 10-percent projected increase in volumes, equivalent to 1.4 million additional cases.

Last year, Tanduay posted about P300 million in net profit.

"Based on our experience, when the agriculture sector is strong, our volume also grows. This year, there's an El Niño (drought) phenomenon and the wet season came early so the prospects are good for the sector," Newsbreak said.

In the first quarter of the year, the country's domestic economy expanded by a higher-than-expected 6.4 percent on the back of the 8.2-percent growth in agriculture. It was the sector's best performance in 13 years.

Mendiola also said that "Tanduay was confident about 9% percent of the rum market, bulk of which was in the Visayas and Mindanao region.

Tanduay, which is celebrating its 130th anniversary this year, also claims to be the second largest manufacturer in the world next to Ronrab of Puerto Rico.

Mendiola also said Tanduay need not borrow externally this year as it still had about P900 million in reserve funds.

Last year, the company granted a 6000-acre loan to Victorias Milling Co. that is considered with common shares at the option of Tanduay anytime after the third year from the signing of the loan.

For this year, Tanduay has earmarked about P1 billion for its expansion projects. Specifically, it plans to build another plant in Cagayan de Oro to serve as Mindanao market based and cheaper.

Mendiola also refused to account for 20 percent of the company's sales. Eight more sales to date is based are being served from Luzon plants, translating to about P200 million a year in freight expenses.

Earlier, the company announced a 20-percent increase in sales volume in the first quarter due to the strong performance of its Tanduay Five Years rum brand. Historically, Mendiola said Tanduay's sales peak toward the end of the year. Boots C. Rombo

SM group bullish on banking sector

By Doris C. Dumlao

SM

TYCOON Henry Sy's SM group, which built a fortune out of shopping malls, is setting a major role for banking business as it is bullish on future regional prospects for the sector.

Teresita Sy-Coson, chair of Banco de Oro Universal Bank (which recently took over majority control of Union Banking Corp. and has a pending agreement to buy record-selling stake in Equitable PCI Banking Corp.), said the bank can cater to targeting more banks.

"It's for the future. It's not for now," Coson told reporters at the launch of BDO's first credit card product last week. "Whatever we are doing is not for the near term but for the future."

"Right now we are quite okay but in the future, with the banking in the region growing big, we've got to grow big too," she said when asked why the group was now heavily betting on the banking business.

If successful, it will be full to take over the reins held by state-owned Social Security System in the country's third biggest private lender Equitable PCI, the SM group can end up with a banking group that is even bigger than current industry leader Metropolitan Bank and Trust Co.

Chinabank is currently the 12th biggest bank in the country with total assets of P139.6 billion as of the first quarter of this year. BDO, on the other hand, is ranked 8th, with total assets of P153.3 billion.

If consolidated with the assets of Equitable PCI, these banks shall be worth about P196.5 billion.

To date, the biggest bank in the country is Metropolitan Bank and Trust Co. of tycoon George Ty with assets worth P472.7 billion, followed by the Ayalas' Bank of the Philippine Islands with total resources of P396.9 billion.

But while BDO is not opposed to an acquisition for local banks to step up, Coson said there were no plans yet to invest in offshore banks.

"But if there are opportunities that will enhance our bank we will look it," she said.

At present, however, Coson admitted that the group could not have its shoulders hoisted with the SSS would push through.

"I don't know when it would feel," she said. "I don't even know what to the next step. I wish I knew."

While the Department of Justice has deemed as illegal the transaction, SSS would still be 29-percent stake in Equitable PCI to BDO, the pension fund has yet to take the next step toward consummating the banking agreement.

"The ball is in their court now," said BDO president Nestor Tan.

Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile III earlier questioned the SSS' plan to sell the controlling stake in Equitable PCI without a public bidding.

Meanwhile, Coson reiterated that there was no immediate plans to merge Chinabank with BDO.

"I can't tell when in the future, but as of now, we are not merging," she said.

Rules on VAT exemption of lawyers, doctors OKd

(Turn to page B-8)

only be limited to those rendered by individuals of legal professionals.

The BIR had come up with new versions of the revenue regulations. In the first version, the VAT exemption only covered doctors and lawyers who practice their profession individually, and unfunded services rendered by partnerships. In the second, the coverage of the exemption included partnerships.

The first version was expected to elicit opposition from the country's lawyers because a substantial number of them are practicing their profession in a partnership.

The DOF in approving the second version, said legal services provided by partnerships should also be covered by the VAT exemption as it does reflect the essence of the law.

It opined that excluding legal services rendered by partnerships from the VAT exemption would defeat the purpose of the tax incentive to the legal profession, since many lawyers do not practice individually.

The revenue regulation, aside from detailing the coverage of the VAT exemption of professionals, likewise clarified that professionals who collected VAT from their clients prior to the issuance of the revenue regulation are not required to remit it to the BIR.

BIR Deputy Commissioner Kim Henares said that although doctors and lawyers have been exempted from VAT since January, they were still liable to remit the amount of VAT they passed on and collected from their clients prior to the issuance of the revenue regulations.

The government expected that in the absence of the revenue regulation, some lawyers and doctors were still passing on and collecting VAT from their clients because the coverage of the VAT exemption was not yet clear.

"They should remit it because it belongs to the government," Henares told reporters.

No free lunch

(Turn to page B-8)

telecommunications sector has been consistently posting double-digit growth in the past two years.

Malaysian growth

I must admit that the best-in-class-expected economic growth reported for the first quarter would have registered an even higher if not just been reading the numbers released figures for Malaysia. Our 6.4 percent GDP growth still pales in comparison to the 7.6 percent first quarter growth posted by Malaysia. Manufacturing and services but the way for those, growing at 12.5 percent and 6.2 percent respectively against our country's 9.2 percent.

In contrast, our vast manufacturing sector only managed 4.2 percent, even slower than last year's performance, in spite of all the competitive advantages our manufacturing sector that everyone expected must have boosted up the sector. In fact our sector is losing ground to our neighbors. Our reliable services sector has been growing at a similar pace to Malaysia's. But Malaysia's service sector growth is inconclusive. It's record tourist arrivals can't continue to be dismissed as coincidences and tech managers and while Malaysia and one other dynamic neighbor all project even stronger performance for the rest of the year, our economy fragile and uncertain despite the strong start, threatened by the domestic oil price increases and continuing questions on the political front. Comments and views at rbalbin@interaccess.ph.

Stocks seen inching up

(Turn to page B-8)

"With the approval, we have gotten past hints of a contentious crisis," one analyst from a local brokerage said.

Jose Ferrais Gimenez of AB Capital Securities noted that sentiment was likewise mixed by a better than expected economic growth in the first quarter. Next week's gross Friday disbursement market sentiment.

Ma. Theresa, the government announced that the country's gross domestic product (GDP) grew 6.4 percent from January to March, beating analysts' predictions of a level of 6 percent.

BPI Securities also said cash dividend announcements also stimulated market activity such as those from First Philippine Holdings and FLTP.

Prices over a table in oil gas are also noted as investors sell that would evade traded before the 1640 just traded level.

"Market has gradually discounted some of the concerns but will continue to monitor developments on US interest rates and the outstanding of votes by general and vice president in Congress," BPI Securities said.

It added that the market may trade between 1,1000 and 1,1172.

Conso Cordova of 2Cordovas said expected inflation might be capped at some investors decrease to pocket gains with possible declines in the downswing he sees.

"The overall trend could stay as before or even speculatively increase when hopefully the highly undervalued, fundamentally sound Trade produce by buying at lows including on highs. Immediate support is 1,460, resistance at 1,510-1,530," this said at last weeks' market report. Elizabeth L. Sanchez

CREDITORS NOT AMENABLE

Citra seeks loan restructuring

By Doris C. Dumlao

TOLLING developer Citra Metro Manila Skyway Corp. is seeking a restructuring of its billions of pesos in loans, but creditor banks led by the Philippine National Bank were not keen on granting the request.

Omar Byron Mier, executive vice president of PBB which has the largest exposure in Citra's Skyway project worth about P5.96 billion, said the stretching of the loan's maturity was not favorable as it would be made at the expense of the creditors.

Citra is seeking a 15-year loan repayment period.

"Right now, we don't need to take a haircut because if we just follow the (payment) schedule all the senior lenders will be fully paid by the end of the year," Mier said.

Mier, too, as standby LCs (letters of credit) provider, will take their places, become senior lenders and in the next five years—to 2009 or 2010 we will be fully paid," he said.

The next batch of creditors to be paid after the LCs are them are the convertible bondholders and preferred shareholders, he noted.

"We don't have to do anything and we will get paid. That's why any proposal that comes from any under that involves a haircut or the participating creditor will not be acceptable to them because we will get paid ultimately," he stressed.

While Citra could service its obligations to its creditors, he said the Skyway developer was seeking the restructuring so as to alleviate the payment of dividends to shareholders using the amount otherwise earmarked for principal debt repayment.

"The cash flows of Citra will be enough to pay us," Mier said. "They have to pay the creditors first," he stressed.

The Skyway project is a joint venture between the Cinco Group of companies and the state-controlled Philippine National Construction Corp.

The PNCC is the franchise holder of the North and South Luzon Expressways while the Citra Group is the largest private sector toll road developer in Indonesia.

Other banking sources estimated that Citra's proposal could result in 40-50 percent loss for the banks.

Aside from the PNB, the other Citra creditors include the Development Bank of the Philippines, Land Bank of the Philippines and some private banks.

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FCDU income up 25% to $666.3M in 2003

By Doris C. Dumlao

LOCAL banks' earnings from foreign-currency deposit units jumped last year as the slump in lending prompted banks to engage more in trading of securities and other investment instruments.

The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas reported that the FCDU system's net income rose by 24.9 percent last year to $666.3 million.

The higher net income helped boost the system's total assets to $13.67 billion in 2003, up 2.5 percent from the previous year.

Despite the increase, the assets were still 16.9 percent lower than the $20.03 billion peak posted in end-1997, just before the Asian financial crisis hit.

As foreign currency loans demand slumped due to the protracted impact of the crisis, banks turned to investing in higher-yielding marketable securities and lending with cash strings, the BSP said.

"As business enterprises shy away from borrowings, some preference moved from regular lending to marketable loans receivable, marketable securities and long term investments," it said in a statement.

Loans, excluding those granted by a bank to another bank, fell 26 percent to $5.47 billion in 2003 from the previous year.

The FCDU system's exposure to BSP borrowings, which traditionally carry lower than market rates, fell by 46 percent to $1.1 billion.

Napocor ups Mindanao power

By Abigail L. Ho

TO ADDRESS fears of a power shortage in Mindanao, the National Power Corp. last week resumed operations of four facilities that were previously shut down for repairs.

Generation from three power plants such as Unit 2 of Power Barge 110 in Davao del Norte would boost power reserves for the week by as much as 231 megawatts (MW).

According to Napocor's operations planning department, the Mindanao grid should have grass power reserves of 62.20 MW today, 91.30 MW tomorrow, 56.13 MW on Wednesday and 75.62 MW on Thursday.

Reduced power reserves would be higher at 305.28 MW on Friday, 129.21 MW on Saturday and 251.48 MW on Sunday.

The barge was shut down due to a dislodged turbo charger. Since the replacement had to be brought in from Switzerland, it took some time before the barge was put back into the system.

With PE 110 on line again, the Mindanao grid now has 95 MW in additional capacity.

Repair works on Unit 3 of the Agusan minihydro power plant in Bukidnon and Unit 4 of the Pitogo Mindanao Power Corp. operated by Jinbishoga closed power plant were also completed recently, further boosting Mindanao's power reserves.

Unit 3 of Southern Philippines Power Corp.'s General Santos closed power plant would also be back in operation tomorrow, upping reserves by 50 MW.

Despite these developments, Napocor president and chief executive Regalio Monga appealed to Mindanao power users not to overdraw from interrupted demand as doing so would result in a power shortfall.

Fears of a power shortfall in the region stemmed from the temporary shutdown of the 154-MW Agus 4 hydroelectric power plant in Baloi, Lanao del Norte.

The generation facility temporarily stopped operating on May 17 due to leaks.

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The DTI-BPS, under its Product Certification Scheme, only allows 50 kg LPG cylinders that have passed the tests and inspection based on the PNS, to be manufactured and sold in the market. The 50 kg LPG cylinders that have passed the standard requirements bear the Philippine Standard (PS) and Import Conformity Clearance (ICC) marks to ensure product reliability and safety. These cylinders are commonly used for industrial and commercial purposes.

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Globe keeps an eye on the environment

By Cecilia H. Eriberto

CORPORATE CITIZEN

AT A TIME when environment consciousness has emerged as a global value, when individual and organizational efforts have boomed on the need to preserve the earth and its natural resources, "good corporate citizenship" has taken on a new dimension.

According to the Philippine Business for Social Progress (PBSP) during the April 22-23 Earth Day 2004 celebration, "the unity of individuals and institutions, working hand-in-hand towards the accustomed task of environmental sustainability, is paramount to lasting peace and development."

The PBSP has regarded the socio-economic capacity to support the country's constant growth with poverty alleviation, a fact that underlying country like the Philippines can never be realized in overall developmental framework.

For Globe Telecom, as modern such subsidiary of first Internet Communications Inc., corporate social responsibility has gone beyond the immediate business on hand. Rather, such has translated into a corporate framework that fosters the long-term sustainability of the local environment – particularly the communities where it conducts business.

"Our company is committed to provide the utmost protection for the health and safety of our employees, as well as the communities and the environment," said Gerardo C. Ablaza Jr., Globe president and CEO. "It is management's primary objective and the employees' individual and collective responsibility to meet this commitment."

Caring for the environment

Today, Manila is the fourth most polluted city in the world, due primarily to vehicular emissions and power plant/industry pollutants. Pollution levels in the Philippines have registered up to four notches above the maximum level set by the World Health Organization.

The high level contact to blood content among the children remains a reality, even in more secure suburbs are traced to air pollution.

Concerns for the current state of affairs has prompted Globe to make a conscious effort to positively contribute to the people's general well-being. Globe has since adopted a Safety, Health and Environment (SHE) policy which stresses the need to minimize its operations's environmental impact through programs to conserve the country's natural resources and prevent pollution through waste reduction.

In September 2003, Globe Telecom forged a Memorandum of Agreement with ABS-CBN Foundation for the proper disposal of Globe's used hand-held or "junk handsets," classified as toxic hazardous waste by the Department of Energy and Natural Resources due to its lead content content.

The stakes Globe the first nationwide Philippine telecommunications company to fully comply with government regulations governing the proper disposal of used lead batteries generated in the course of day-to-day industrial operations.

Toxic

The cellular used from the used battery is corrosive causes irritation or inflamers to the skin, and can contaminate soil or groundwater. On the other hand, lead can cause skin irritation, is toxic when ingested, and can also contaminate the soil or groundwater.

Over the years, Globe has generated thousands of used lead acid batteries. The company was thus faced with the challenge of implementing a program to ensure compliance to Republic Act No. 6969, requiring the telecom firm to dispose its junk batteries at a DENR-accredited recycler—in this case, the Philippine Recycling Inc. (PRI).

Thus, working with its non-GSM arrangement with ABS-CBN's DZMM-owned permit to transport hazardous materials to identified Globe collecting sites.

These are in Luzon (Taclac BTSC or Mobile Switching Center, Antero BTSC, Barotac and Batangas telephone land exchanges, Bicol mobile yard), Visayas (Cebu Central Warehouse and Mandaluyong, Bacolod switch), and Mindanao (Iligan telephone land exchange).

The batteries are then picked up from the battery stores by PRI for proper treatment and recycling. At its new plant, Globe donates to ABS-CBN the proceeds from the sale of the junk batteries to the recycler.

Prior to last year's MoA, Globe Telecom had initially donated in 2002-2003 over 4,000 pieces of such used batteries, which, while numbering to a modest P200,000 in cash donations to Bantay Kalikasan programs, signals the company's real concern to comply with DENR and global efforts to preserve the environment.

Tripartite benefits to the program

Since then, Globe has turned over 9,350 used industrial batteries culled from the company's various corporate, stores, wireless and telecom backbone facilities, as well as from its fleet of service vehicles—enough stock to close to half a million pesos (P500,000) donation to ABS-CBN's environmental efforts.

According to Ramon Ballesteros, its partnership with Globe is the biggest so far—both in terms of scope and volume. Globe, on the other hand, has entered into the first telecom company to initiate such an endeavor.

The partnership actually addresses, aside from its main goal, multiple goals set by the various stakeholders. The union has allowed Globe to effectively comply with the Hazardous Waste Management Law (or RA 6969).

Ramon Ballesteros, on the other hand, has gotten a new source of funds for its other environment projects such as the Save the La Mesa Watershed, Bantay Usok and Bantay Kalikasan Hotline.

With this arrangement, PRI as the recycling/treatment facility has gotten a new supply for itself—he main material required from waste. Lead materials used in the manufacture of lead-acid batteries are not indirectly mined in the country so that, with recycling of junk batteries, importation is minimized and dollars are kept in the reserve.

Call for compliance

Recently, Environment and Natural Resources Secretary Elisea G. Gozun has called on the industry sector to improve environmental compliance through self-regulation and to adopt cleaner production technologies.

"There is a clear indication that companies are getting more environmentally conscious," Gozun said. "These companies are realizing the connection between environmental protection and being able to do good business in the country."

Such is the thrust of Globe and Ramon, as they continue to live the values of safety and preservation of the environment.

(Mr. Federico Ruiz of the PR division of Globe Telecom's corporate communications group.)

A R&B of workers take proper care in disposing of the hazardous lead-acid batteries used in cellular phones.

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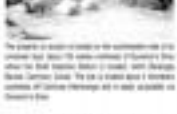

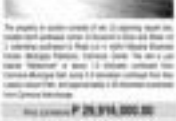

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UCPB

Receiver recommends Philrealty debt program

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

A COURT-APPOINTED receiver has devised a way for banks and the Philippine Realty Holdings Inc. to agree on a program to settle the property firm's P1.2 billion in debt.

In an evaluation and recommendation report filed with the Quezon City regional trial court last April, rehabilitation receiver Ricardo Venuzel proposed that P890.6 million in secured debt be restructured and ownership properties.

The other P1.31 billion in secured debt would be settled through a swap of assets including a major housing project.

This will result in Philrealty keeping P907.2 million in properties that may be used either for joint venture development or outright sale.

Shares of Philrealty have not been traded since December 2002 after it sought court protection from its creditors due to it insolvency problems.

Philrealty has been involved in high rise projects including the construction of the Philippine Stock Exchange Inc. towers in Ortigas.

Philrealty earlier proposed to settle its debt with secured lenders entirely through dacion en pago or swap arrangements.

The banks, on the other hand, preferred a mix of restructuring of loan payments and dacion en pago.

Philrealty owed P1.86 billion in interest and principal payments to the Metropolitan Bank and Trust Co., P1,65.4 million to the Land Bank of the Philippines and P168.3 million to Prudential Bank.

Venuzel told the banks' joint that these three creditor banks agreed to rehabilitate the company as they believed it has Philrealty was solvent and had a viable business.

It was proposed that Philrealty restructure P890.6 million out of its total debt in two tranches—A term loan facility worth P180 million to cover interest and principal debt over 10 years and another tranche worth P710.6 million covered by a zero coupon bond where payments will hinge on the availability of cash.

Should there be excess cash generated, it would be used to fund the completion of the firm's condominium project dubbed the Andrea Heath Skyline Tower in Quezon City which is estimated to cost P1.34 billion to finish.

PLDT, Smart consider major restructuring plan

By Clarissa S. Batino

PHILIPPINE Long Distance Telephone Co. is looking at the possibility of a major corporate restructuring after 2007.

The restructuring could result in the highly profitable cellular unit Smart Communications Inc. taking over PLDT as the jewel among the local companies of the Hong Kong-based First Pacific group.

PLDT and Smart chair Manuel Pangilinan said the group was considering several options to come up "with the most appropriate corporate structure" that would make the telecom giant more efficient starting 2007 since the company's debts are reduced to a more manageable level.

A more efficient organization, according to Pangilinan, would borrow at a cheaper rate when it secures the market for funds to fund its expansion projects.

One of these medium-term options, he said, might involve creating a spin-off company that would make Smart the parent firm and PLDT a subsidiary.

"Today, PLDT is on top. One scheme we are looking at is to put Smart on top since 55 percent of the revenue of PLDT comes from Smart," he said.

If that happens, Pangilinan said it was possible that First Pacific Co. Ltd. would also participate in the restructuring since the Hong Kong-based investment firm currently owns 29.3 percent of PLDT.

Pangilinan stressed that any corporate reorganization would only happen since PLDT's debts are down to $1.2 billion or only after 2007.

Smart would acquire PLDT's 90 percent stake in Pilipino Telephone Corp. this year if the conversion of Pilltel's P20.3 billion debts into Smart's borrowings pushes through.

An analyst said this could signal the start of PLDT's restructuring.

"It will be a complex change. That is why if we ever decide to do it, it will be three years from now. The group is doing well as it is and so we will stay put for the meantime," Pangilinan said.

Any corporate facelift is seen to affect PLDT's 18,000- workforce and Smart's 5,000 people especially the 300 holding key positions in the parent firm and about 200 in the wireless subsidiary.

Pangilinan also said Smart would not be listing its shares on the stock exchange before 2006.

He said PLDT would need the dividends from Smart to reduce its $1.3-billion debt as of end-2003. Smart is to remit to PLDT for itself P11.1 billion of its P16.1 billion it's net profit last year.

PLDT would use the money to pay $160-million in debts maturing in the second quarter.

Smart had been PLDT's best performing asset since 2002.

LIFESTYLE

Lito Chito Batol-Fortunes
Interior Critic Lito Zulueta

INQUIRER EXCLUSIVE

A most magical 'Prisoner'

Maverick director Alfonso Cuarón works the perfect spell as he makes this darker, more grown-up 'Harry Potter' film the best in the series

By Rust S. De Vera

REVIEW

IT'S amazing how much Harry Potter has grown up. Actor Daniel Radcliffe, now clearly taller than his last appearance as the young wizard in 2002's "Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets," also sports a hipper hairdo and a pro-nounced rampot. Radcliffe, Rus Wesley (as brother Ropert Grint) and Hermione Granger fan even some fetching Emma Watsons) have also done some growing up since their last time on screen.

The kids return to the Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry for their third year, and even more has changed. With "Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban," the progression of movies based on J.K. Rowling's beloved series of books continues after a one-year hiatus of silence—but it also experiences a growth spurt similar to the one experienced by the three young leads.

"Prisoner" is, as a book, the most compact and suspenseful of the Potter books. Thanks to the agile hand of new director Alfonso Cuarón ("A Little Princess"), "Prisoner," as a film, keeps those characteristics. But unlike the earlier two Potter movies, directed by Chris Columbus, who stays on as co-writer, "Prisoner" carves its own path as a film instead of being slavishly faithful to the original text.

Perhaps the darkest and most frightening of the books, this movie structure leaves a mark on its viewers like the cold kiss of the Dementors.

Just a little more

After all, a new school year means new teachers, subjects and challenges. But the most things about Harry all those things are just a little more.

"Prisoner" finds Harry and company eager to resume their magical studies. But their arrival at Hogwarts is accompanied by the chilling news that one of the most notorious prisoners at Azkaban Prison—the mad magician Sirius Black (Gary Oldman)—has escaped and is on his way to Hogwarts to kill Harry. Meanwhile, a new Defense against the Dark Arts teacher named Professor R.J. Lupin ("Dragonheart's" David Thewlis) befriends Harry. But even this ideal: a broken by sighting of Black closer and closer to Hogwarts.

And as the fugitive Black closes in on his prey, Harry finds out that Black is the man who helped head Harry's parents to their death. Now, Harry wants revenge but all is not what it seems and, as the hunter and hunted cross paths, secrets are shown wide open and Harry's life will never be the same again as betrayal and disarray come between friends and foes.

Old and new characters

"Prisoner" stays true to the book's content as it delves much deeper into the mythology of Harry Potter than ever before. Aside from introducing key characters in the Potter pantheon such as Black and Lupin, "Prisoner" also introduces Hermione, a figure from the past

GR Richard Harris as Albus Dumbledore.

A LANKIER Rupert Grint as Ron Weasley

EMMA Watson, more looking than ever as Hermione Granger

IN "PRISONER," Daniel Radcliffe's Harry Potter is hippie, taller, all grown up...

...WHILE Tom Felton is a moose; bubbler Draco Malfoy

SEASONED actors Gary Oldman, Maggie Smith and Alan Rickman lend talented support.

LIKE its three young leads, the "Harry Potter" series exhibits a welcome growth spurt in "Prisoner of Azkaban."

A most magical 'prisoner'

NOW a teenager coming to terms more forcefully with his destiny, Harry Potter has also developed a more pronounced temper (top), a new school year at the Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry (below)

Warner Bros.' "Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban" opens in Metro Manila

played by the chameleon-like Timothy Spall ("The Last Samurai").

Guarini and screenwriter Steve Kloves turned a large part of Rowling's book invisible, shrinking its focus very narrowly on Harry and his being haunted by Sirius. For the first time in the movie series, events are literally transposed and repositioned for a smoother narrative, with some subplots dropped entirely. So there will undoubtedly be some things that fans of Rowling's book will miss; it would have been nice to have more than one Quidditch scene and while a lot is revealed regarding what really happened to Harry's parents, much of the rich little details in the book are missing from this "Prisoner."

New electric current

Yet these omissions that Guarini did keep move ensuring in their wonderfulness and their accuracy, from the opening scene at Privet Drive to the final scene. It becomes immediately clear from scenes such as the inflating of the horrible Aunt Marge to the jaw-dropping height this romp through the wonderful London streets that Guarini has injected an entirely new electric current through the Potter movies. From this jumpstart to the encounter with the beggars in the wastelands, it is clear this is Guarini's show to run.

Additionally, Guarini unleash on certain elements and scenes to flesh out the plot further. He brings his own cinematic touches in other set pieces, zooming in and reducing to capture the essence of those scenes, electing to simply sweep right into the narrative instead of engaging in any introductory exposition.

What's doubly's never that smuggles new to Harry's world or hard-core bowling fans will find themselves repelled by "Prisoner" as if by an Expelliarmus spell. This is the most cohesive movie in the series thus far, feeling much better than its mixed two hours plus running time. The well-orchestrated twists pursued the end prove massively satisfying. Even John Williams' score feels like it has just emerged from a magical, musical spa.

Things are helped along immensely by steadily improving performances by the three leads, though Radcliffe and Watson really do take center stage in "Prisoner."

Great actors, small roles

Additionally, still effacing yet effective turns in smaller parts by great actors add to the wonder of the movie. Oldman's Sirius Black is an effective because this character does carry much of the series' mystic enigma; Thewlis carries his Lupin as a man with a good heart but weighed by a terrible secret. But though it is a very small role, it is Emma Thompson's gently and broad turn as somewhat kooky Divination teacher professor Trelawney that audiences will no doubt remember.

The only downside to so many new faces in messy roles is that old favorites such as Robbie Hagrid (Robbie Coltrane), Professor McGonagall (Dame Maggie Smith) and even many Professor Severus Snape (Alan Rickman) get pushed into the background. Not to worry, though. A scooter Draco Malfoy (Tom Felton) and redhead cute still around to foulmell Harry and friends.

If all the newcomers, however, no problem: more is as crucial as that of venerable actor Michael Gambon ("Crushed Path") who takes over the role of the late great Richard Harris as Hogwarts headmaster Albus Dumbledore. Seemingly stepping away from Harris' version, Gambon's Dumbledore exhibits swell, dumb through "Prisoner" as a supernatural, wizardly presence. In many ways, Gambon's sprightly tone reflects "Prisoner's" newfound vitality.

And through they are only computer generated efforts, the movie's dreaded Dementors are even more frightening on the screen than in the book. Hovering silently yet menacingly throughout the movie like possessed scarecrows, these Dementors will instead power of the Dark Elders from "The Lord of the Rings" or perhaps how Aragorn Gregory should really be like, only scarier. See them for yourself—if you dare.

But magical folk and muggles alike should go see this movie because "Prisoner" shows us entirely new direction for the Harry Potter franchise yet maintains much of the charm and wonder that make it so appealing. Not only has Alfonso Cuarón lowered up the best Harry Potter movie so far but it may just be the best movie in 2004.

Next year, "Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire" will be directed by veteran Mike Newell ("Four Weddings and a Funeral") and should project a different aura as well. In the meantime, savor "Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban," a movie that, with its amazing actors and maverick director, will cure the darkest, most gruesome day's blues. Has yet while evoking a sense of frankly contained joy that is more than a Firebolt, and anything but ruthless.

Warner Bros.' "Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban" opens in Metro Manila tomorrow.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

LIFESTYLE

(Bird Pineda and Lorna Tolentino (above) are nominated for acting honors, along with Isabelle de Leon (just by bubbles, below).

'Magnifico,' a touching tale of a boy's innocent but liberating ways, squares off with 'Babae sa Breakwater,' 'Crying Ladies' and 'Bridal Shower'

2004 GAWAD URIAN

'Children's' film and 'adult' movies are strange bedfellows

By Lito B. Zulueta

A SMALL film about a boy's naïve goodness and unselfconscious awareness that sounds all of the clarion and countenance of adulthood is to the radically complex of adult-disease movies that depict a poor mother's comical attempts to prove her worthiness to a son being claimed by his father, the confusion of lower-depths characters living around Manila Bay's breakwaters, and the sexy escapades of three restless women that show how feminists may be nothing but the same old-ta-tsa-tsa love-and-war power struggle of the sexes.

All four movies—unlikely bedfellows at first—are nominated for best picture in this year's Gawad Urian given by the Manunuri ng Pelikulang Pilipino, the society of film critics. Two of the nominees—"Magnifico" (Viva Films) and "Babae sa Breakwater" (Cinemanila Productions)—have major actors in the Bella and Gawad Urian brackets. But no two movies could have more contrasting styles.

"Magnifico" is traditional under covers, the realism often heightened or muted when it presents the world through the eyes of an 11-year-old, portrayed with star quality and self-consciousness by Jan Marini Jimenez. Directed by Maryo J. de los Reyes, it is a movie that celebrates the love of

'Children's' film and 'adult' movies are strange bedfellows

From page E1

the director's more than 20-year career—a versatility attested to the young, powerful characterizations, and a vision of love and humanity.

The movie is perhaps the most singled out, by its ensemble acting, with Manno nominated as best actor, and Gloria Romero, Lorna Tolentino, Celia Rodriguez, Isabella de Leon, Girlie Sevilla, Albert Martinez and Mitch Gil nominated for best supporting actors.

"Breakwater" is a social realist with cheerful hue, misery touches that remind the viewers of the movie's fictional nature without however downgrading the reality it reflects: promises with this, placed by politically inspired violence in the countryside who move to the city and are forced to endure unfortunate conditions; there. Directed by Mario O'Hara, it is both mordant and magical, unflinching and abiding. It is a movie that baffles and intrigues.

Perhaps its movie fans, the most baffling thing is that for a movie without any heavyweight star, "Breakwater" has been nominated heavily in the acting categories: newcomers Katherine Luna and Rochelle King for lead actress and Mario Dedoles, also a newcomer, for supporting actor.

Probably the only thing similar about the two movies is that Filipino moviegoers rejected both during their regular run last year. Early is the sad state of audience appreciation of Philippine cinema. Their unsolidarities bandwagoned by the fireworks of Hollywood theme-park movies, Filipinos don't much anymore interest in their own movies. Even "Magnifico," which has touches of melodrama and is not your usual "art-film" at movie, played to empty halls. The two movies have had a better reception abroad.

NEWCOMER Katherine Luna is nominated for best actress for 'Bakwit sa Breakwater.' Charry Pie Picache and Dina Bonnevie are contenders for the same honor for 'Bridal Shower.'

CROWD-PLEASER 'Crying Ladies'

Comic relief

Not surprisingly because they are comedies, "Crying Ladies" (Daniel Palmero) and "Bridal Shower" (Reiko Filmo) were commercial successes during their regular run.

"Crying" pleases fewmore of its unusual subject: women who cry for joy about to lose her son to her estranged husband, the heroine (Sharon Cuneta) spends the remaining days with him and take themselves over by working as a artist in a Chinese traditional make-shop with two pals especially in hard-up and ready to lie. The movie is distinguished by deft direction by Mark Meily and engaging acting, especially by Hilda Koronel, Sherry Lara and Eve Quiaco, who are nominated in the supporting acting categories.

"Bridal" is a sex comedy revolving around the three close friends and their problems with men: one has had too many but wishes now to settle down with someone who, having just come from a troubled marriage, is not about to take the plunge again; another wishes the social and emotional compromises that come with marrying a rich guy; and still another who cannot go straight with most because of her weight problems, and falls in love with a sexy male stripper-dancer with disastrous results.

MARIO O' Hara's sensitive "Bakwit sa Breakwater"

Directed by Jeffrey Jeturian, "Bridal" is a serial of politics played out with farce and a little tenderness. In best moments are sheer slapstick as would-be suitors who damages her mind and kills her pet dog instead, a ballroom enthusiast who acting off the knee of her handsome dentist after he dances with her). Like the three other best picture nominees, it is also distinguished by its chilly good setting, with Dina Bonnevie and Cherry Pie Picache nominated for best actress, and Alfred Vargas for best supporting actor.

How will the movies fare in the Gawad Urian best picture award? They are all good movies with their share of strengths and misdemeanors. "Magnifico" may strike some as too sadist and voluminous, perhaps maudlin and childish. "Breakwater" may turn off some critics for its soft-focus camera and hackneyed poetry. "Crying" may impress some with its irreverences, but the comedy may wear off when they consider that the characters are a tad too under-bite and most like caricatures, not real persons with true souls. And "Bridal" may engage some because of its earlier aforementioned political flair that portray women as regular members of the old-boy network, playing along the same rules of the market and the jungle as the men they despise but could not live without.

But perhaps the last shot all of these issues could be raised against the movies should reveal their complexity, intelligence, and artistry. They were really the best movies of 2003.

The 2004 Gawad Urian will be presented on June 19 at the RFP Theater. For the complete list of nominees and other information, visit www.manunuri.com. Take part in the online poll of the people's choice for the Gawad Urian Award to www.inquirer.com.ph.

Strauss and Schubert at 5,000 ft above sea level

By Pablo A. Tariman
Contributor

Baguio audience gives tenor and soprano a well-deserved standing ovation

CAMP John Hay's Trade and Cultural Center in Baguio City was the venue for the to-cost song recital of tenor Leonard de la Cruz and soprano Joan Faire, with pianist Mary Ann Espino.

The highlight of the concert was Strauss' "Wiegenlied" (Cradle Song), Op. 41, No. 1, sung exquisitely line by Cruz and a masterstroke from Schubert's "Gretas Spinnrad (Gretchen") performed by Faire. Cruz' Gounod Contest and Gheuber's "Ciel Cabello mas fatal," sang with luminous finesse by de la Cruz.

Performed at 5,000 ft above sea level, the pieces acquired a mystic aura that was hard to define. The result was not a concert; it was an experience.

The tenor had some vocal problems and avoided dangerous arias and art songs. But de la Cruz still made a fine and memorable performance.

After the concert, Gounod's "Cancion Ricu-Kanadal," the Baguio audiences gave the performers a well-deserved standing ovation. The second to the last in Inn-Haus three months the Inn was for Cecile Licad who got not just one but three standing ovations in March.

EVELYN Mamba

In the early '80s, the famous violinist Vladimir Spivakov electrified the crowd at the Baguio Convention Center. The high-light of that concert was Spivakov's playing of the second movement of a Beethoven sonata with a baby crying in the background while the audience remained quiet.

A few years later, Spivakov-ite Lazovski Simona Antonia performed at the St. Louis Auditorium and the audience included then chairman Eugenio Torres and the Sisterna.

Cecile Licad and the cellist Antonio Alvarez performed in the late '80s also at the old St. Louis auditorium. They closed a Beethoven sonata but Licad opened by Franz Liszt's Gnomegia. A year later, Poland's pianist Irina Litchfield performed.

The concerts had its corporate sponsorship except for meals and hotel accommodations but the staging of the musical events became the talk of the town for many months.

To keep Baguio's cold and warm active,

LEONEL de la Cruz

both concert goers and corporations should join hands to make certain musical events possible.

Camp John Hay's Manor Hotel should be commended for hosting concerts that bring people from various sectors of Baguio City.

Vialle concert

If you are wondering what sort of musical rankings band opening alumni are when they are starring, watch the Sarah Vialle concert on Friday, May 28, at the Francisco Santiago Hall. Called the Sarah's music overload, the evening has been effective even for handicapped children.

Cantonese Assembly introduced this method to the Philippines in 1982. She is now president of the Philippine Suzuki Association. For inquiries, call the BEO secretariat, tel. 6134858.

World premiere

A new work of Germany-based Filipino composer Alan Hilario, a pianist-conductor, will be premiered in Stuttgart May 20. Hilario was a graduate of the Philippine High School for the Arts. He is doing forty-and-a-half concerts for new music in Germany.

Vacationing

Soprano Evelyn Mamba, the first and last Filipino to sing at New York's Metropolitan Opera, is now for a vacation and a few master classes. Also in town is Oliver Santiago, two-time winner of the National Music Competition for Young Artists (Manuyo), who runs two concerts in conjunction in and outside his school, the Lyra University in Florida.

Cellist Oscar Michael Cue, an outstanding graduate of the PMSA, has just graduated and will pursue a master's degree at the Moreland University in Baltimore.

New book analyzes American malaise

IN "CUSTOM Made for How Should Do order," author Peter G. de Kunzel argues that there is much American can learn from Hong Kong.

"Hong Kong is a city that blends the best of Eastern and Western cultures," de Kunzel notes. "Where democratic activists is still vital and government policy is in the hands of a professional and highly competent civil service. Where a carefully balanced social order has shown that many of America's ills—intolerance, religious extremism, the breakdown of family—do not have to be sources of conflict or despair."

In a series of witty personal anecdotes and conversations, de Kunzel analyzes the problems of America in the 21st century and calls for a new

social order. He bases his observations on a lifetime of experience — as a lawyer, a businessman, an activist — and draws on many of Hong Kong's qualities as a guide for others.

"Hong Kong has the potential to become a model society for America to emulate," says de Kunzel. "It blends the best of Anglo-American and Asian cultures in which values are the cultural norms and foundations of today's American and Western civilization."

John van der Kamp, columnist for the South China Morning Post, in his review of the book, said: "Peter de Kunzel has the advantages of expatriate not limited to the borders of the United States alone and his targets for stupidity go a little wider than where men alone."

THE BALLET Philippines Young Choreographers: Mary Bendijo; Irish Abajero, Caroline and Corinne Bilog, Mica Barcos, Ruben de Dios and Nikki Winston Tendrijo.

Dance-concert presents new choreographers

BALLET Philippines, the country's premiere dance company continues its legacy of excellence as it introduces the most promising batch of choreographers and their works via "Suite of Dreams," a dance concert, on June 5, 8 p.m., at the Tanghalang Huseng Batute of the Cultural Center of the Philippines.

"Suite of Dreams" presents the works of seven soon-to-be choreographers of the company. They are Irish Abajero (Bulo Mamaclid), Mica Barcos (Bulo Mo Once), Mary Bendijo (Ding Ding Pagpitan), Caroline Adea (Hindi ako), Corinne Adea (Round), Ruben de Dios (2 x 3), and Nikki Winston Tendrijo (Tambalan).

The show will be the first time the public will get to witness the endeavors of these artists collectively known as the Ballet Philippines Young Choreographers (BPYC).

According to BP associate artistic director Alden Lagonoy, "The decision to present the works of BPYC is very much attuned to the commitment of the company to support and nurture its artists. We promote the audience that they will definitely enjoy and appreciate the choreography. Best not the expectations or observations of young people displayed in dance."

"Suite of Dreams" is one dance-concert experience you should not miss. Entrance fee is P400. Call 8526047.

Summer dance recital

KIDS showcases its/learning Arts Foundation Inc. will stage the second recital of its summer dance classes on June 3, 7 p.m., at the Meralco Theater in Pasig City.

The recital, billed as "A Night of Dreams," is divided into three segments—"Theater Classics," "Broadway and Movie Hits" and "MTV."

Memorable dance sequences from "Swan Lake," "Coppelia," "Sleeping Beauty," "Giselle" and "Don Quixote" are given a new life by the dance school's resident teachers for the ballet classes—Nursery, Advance Nursery, Classical 1, 2 and 3, Adults Beginners, Adults Intermediate, Basic Intermediate and Advance.

The students of Jane Cleary Regalado, Children's Beginners, Children's Level 2B, Ballroom Intermediate), Latin dance, tap (Children's Beginners, Children's Level 4, Adults 4 and 6), runner) will do their take on world-famed musical stage and film productions with their show-stopping numbers. "New York, New York," "Chess," "Do Re Mee," "Think Pink," "Music," "Singer's Place" and "Mikey's Groove."

Finally, the students of Sydney Christ, Rubi, Tessa Level 1 and 2 and seven jazz will transport the theater-goers from MTV to the stage of the Metalco Theater.

Julie Borromeo is considered a pillar of the Philippine dance world for her school, choreographic works, leadership and pioneering spirit. The school has been keeping dance enthusiasts' passion for the art form alive for the last 46 years. It has become a training ground for local and foreign luminaries like Shanya Ramos, Nancy Probst, Enrico Labayen, Gloria Teddy, Ding Hurtado, Monique Wilson and Lea Salonga, as well as famed and major personalities like Cherie Gil, Pilar Pilapil and Phoby Beato.

Borromeo is the co-founder of Dance Theater Philippines and holds major positions in leading dance and theater foundations and institutions in the country. Call 7264974.

LIFESTYLE

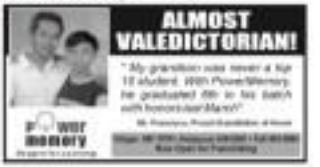
Taiwan's Bao-an Temple restores community life

COLORED ceramic bowls meticulously cut to form a three-dimensional mosaic of mythical dragons and realistic flowers

ONE of the recipients of the prestigious 2000 Unesco Asia-Pacific Culture Heritage Award, the newly restored Bao-an Temple

The winner of the Unesco award in restoration shows that heritage preservation builds community pride and economic strength

HERO-walk barefoot over live coals as a penitential offering to the gods



PRIDE OF PLACE

Augusto P. Villalon

AFTER completing seven years of painstaking and detailed restoration that fully restores the original looks back to its architecture, the Bao-an Temple in Taipei glowed as it ended its month-long celebration to mark the birthday of its main deity, the Baoduang Dadi, the God of Medicine.

The scholarly approach to and technical excellence of the restoration is outstanding. Its meticulous attention to detail, the faithfulness to maintaining authentic design and craftsmanship, and its sensitive rewards of a massive engineering upgrade to update all technology to modern standards, were some factors that led to the temple being awarded as a recipient of the prestigious 2000 Unesco Asia-Pacific Cultural Heritage Award.

The Unesco citation reads, "The conservation of the 1800 Dihuangdong Bao-an Temple represents a major technical accomplishment and is to be commended for its meticulous scope and depth of conservation work."

It continues, "The project has taken a balanced approach between using modern scientific conservation methods and traditional architectural and decorative detail, and the generous sponsorship of the project has resulted in the comprehensive conservation of the temple's religious and architectural significance."

The entire 1,000 sq m temple complex was fully restored at a cost of NT.5 million. Noted were primarily taped and watercolor undertakings by the temple restoration staff, assisted by the best woodcarvers from Taiwan, then-India and Europe.

The greatest lesson of the Bao-an Temple is that the impact of its restoration goes way beyond the sound architectural and historic values. The newly restored temple has become the source of neighborhood activity, proof that the project's social impact is strong.

The temple stands in Dadongdong, one of the older sections of Taipei at the confluence of the Keelung and Tamsui Rivers. The area deservedly took little touched by modernization.

A world away from the glitzy grand boulevards of Taipei, four-story buildings of walk-up flats line the streets of the busy quarter. Behind the wooded sidewalk-fronting brick sides of each street are rows of small shops that feed to the generations of the same family have been conducting business from that location.

Next to the temple, shops sell candles, incense, wads of paper cut with string, lucky charms, figurines, and whatever else is needed for offerings. Further along the street are traditional medicine shops, specialty food shops, bicycle and car repair shops, calligraphy shops that sell papers, brushes and ink.

Somehow the McDonald's, KFCs, 7-11s, Starbucks, Watsons and supermarkets mushroomed in other parts of Taipei have not diminished habits of the neighborhood, turning fast-food into good old slow-food culture the way the residents like it.

My hosts refused to allow me to buy tea at the neighborhood supermarket. Instead we went into a tea shop where the proprietors, husband and wife, began their tea ritual by showing pictures of their tea plantation in the central Taiwan mountains. They told me to bathing fragrant about the process of picking, pounding, and drying the leaves.

Next they poured samples, one type of tea at a time, into tiny, translucent blue-and-white fine porcelain cups while explaining the distinctive qualities of what we were sampling.

Time stood still. Over little cups of tea our friendship progressed well into the afternoon.

It was a slow, food-infused afternoon, as an

temple. Volunteers sing in the choirs, play in the orchestra, serve as temple guides and in programs.

It is interesting that the volunteers come from all walks of life and are of all ages. Housewives, highly placed professionals, new graduates and university students all volunteer because they feel that participating in temple activities is fitting of their devotion to the Baoduang Dadi.

Each volunteer is fiercely proud of the restored temple. Aware of the lengthy and complicated restoration process that finally brought the temple back to its original glory, each returns to respect the structure and protect it from damage.

My do heritage preservation to improve the quality of life of our children. Bao-an Temple shows that the real point of preserving heritage is to benefit the community at large. That is the true success of Bao-an Temple.

Having seen an award for architectural excellence, the site deserves another one for its great achievement in community development.

E-mail feedback to ajvillalon@hotmail.com

A GIANT figure stops during the king procession in honor with reverence to Baoduang Dadi at the main portal of the Bao-an Temple

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HOSTING & EMCEEING

Night of music and creativity toasts the Filipino romantic

PIANIST Cecile Licad performs Rural Concerto with the San Miguel Philharmonic Orchestra under the baton of Eugene Cabilla.

AYALA Triangle lit up recently with a vibrant fusion of art and music for the concert "Hindi Kita Malilimot: The Filipino as Romantic," celebrating Ayala Foundation's Finders' Night and Ayala Corporation's 176th anniversary.

Donors and supporters of Ayala Foundation as well as the public enjoyed an evening of Filipino and classical music interpreted by Cecile Licad, conductors Eugene Cabilla, Ryan Cayabyab and Arnel Mercado, and the San Miguel Philharmonic Orchestra.

During the performances, photographs of Ayala chief Jaime Zobel were projected on the canopy of Tower One and Exchange Plaza, dramatically transforming its fountain area into a concert hall.

The concert was the highlight of 60's Founders' Day, an annual celebration which recognizes those who have supported or partnered with the foundation's various social development projects in the past year. This event was open to the public and was attended by an estimated number of 1,000 people.

Hosted by Ayala Corporation, Ayala Land, and the Bank of the Philippine Islands, the concert was also part of the year-long celebration of Ayala's 176th anniversary that frames the 176 years through a fusion of various arts and culture, entertainment and social development projects.

Featured artists performed the works of Victor Wekdowsky, Maurice Ravel, as well as the music of romantic Filipino composers including Constancio de Guzman, Nilo Velarde Jr. and National Artists Lucrecia Kasilag and Levi Celerio. Cayabyab conducted the SMPO in a selection of great Filipino love songs which he himself orchestrated.

Fresh from her successful Asia debut, Licad performed Maurice Ravel's Concerto in G. Filipino pianist with the SMPO under the baton of Castillo. Castillo, a highly acclaimed Filipino-American conductor, was recently appointed principal conductor of the Philippine Philharmonic Orchestra.

Since 1961, the Ayala group of companies through the Ayala Foundation has taken an active role in helping improve the lives of the underprivileged through its various social development, education, arts and culture, information technology and youth development programs.

"Ayala has long been aware of its corporate social responsibility" noted Zobel. "Since its inception, Ayala Foundation has always striven to evolve and meet the changing needs of the times. Today we continue to look for ways by which we can further nurture the soul of the artistry of the Filipino."

PHOTOS by Jaime Zobel, cast on the canopy of Tower One, transformed Ayala's corporate headquarters into a stunning concert hall.

Collector's items on show

OUTSTANDING and collectible works from top artists are available at Galeria Joaquin in the Makati, May 21-June 11.

"Collectible" features works by Jose Joya, Juvenal Sanso, Onib Olmedo, Malang, Raul Isibaja, Angelito Antonio, Mario Parial, Norma Belleza, Manny Garibay, Hortensia Mapua, Dominic Rubio, Raymund Ray Arada and Fabrizio Tiu Reyes.

Among those featured is an abstract Joya, an acrylic on canvas that is predominantly orange. Also on exhibit are two vintage works from the now rare Bulletin series of issues from the 1970s. Onib Olmedo's provocative drawings are also on display.

Another highly collectible piece is a Pastel painting of "The Fish Harvest" highlighted by gold leaf paint rendered almost like Gustave Klimpton icons.

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"HALOGANA and Crimson Purple," by Hermes Magno

"HAUR 3," by Dominic Rubio

Sansô salutes summer with flowers

By Gino Dueñas
Cool Guide

HIS 16th some and guest many times before. On those periodic visits to the country, the itinerant artist sold home, he marks each visit with a show of recent works.

True to form, Juvenal Sansô is in a very upcoming mood, treating on his stylistic motifs to celebrate summer through the subject he is known for—flowers.

Aptly called "Hot Air" (the Spanish equivalent of "summer"), the show at the second level of the Podium was the brainchild of the artist, who makes it a point to spend summer in the Philippines, "the blessed time," he says, "of plenty, of manners, of friendly complexions and a feeling of openness." It is, as everyone knows, a time for harvest...of friends and fiestas.

Sansô has, of course, painted flowers directly from the imagination, eschewing rigid botanical correctness, but opting to paint them as flowers of the mind. The pieces in the show have been painted over the last 20 years and have thus been acquired by various collectors: as such they bear the lasting imprint of memento spent, in places where Sansô had traveled to and from.

Though better known for his depictions of rural fiestas, manoeuvers and merchandise, as well as Bulacan, known locally as the bailiadic that used to dot the fishing village of San Nicolas in Pandacqui, Sansô is just as famous for his floral subjects as this show attests.

The blooms are overflown with colors, sounds greens and reds and shades of blue, and these still bits come in vases and jars of various shapes. They bear the imprint of the artist's strong national affinity with their petals and leaves practically leaping out of their branches and twigs.

"GENTLE Flowers"

"CLOTHED in Rainbow"

JUVENAL Sansô

While each painting—acrylics on paper—has such a unique story, the 29-piece collection makes for an ensemble, a grand and stirring celebration of flowers that defy facile categorization.

Portraying his undying passion for the subject, the master of pastels surveilles emphasizes his ethereal personality and flair for nature that seemingly radiate from these blooms.

The vigorous demands of painting still life are evident in the assortment of bouquets, the kind of light and texture they evoke; indeed, with no figure and no object to portray, save for what the omniscient Decatur Eastern sees fit to see the piece that is important, it is what I put of myself into what I paint."

Turning 75 this November, Sansô has gone on a sabbatical, curtailing his workload and enjoying retirement in the country blessed with a perennial summer.

In this ripe period of his life, he wishes to commit himself to a greater role in art education and giving back a fair share of the blessings to those who wish to pursue art.

Art sessions

To spice up the Flower Festival notes, the organizers saw it fit to gather some of the artists whose they engaged in a series of on-the-spot painting sessions. Among these artists were Abdi Dalis, Gigi de Pio, Roberto Tiny Reyes, Dominic Rubio, Ramon Rey Acuña, Jerome Francisco, Edwin Lacierda, and many others.

During the session, the sunday crowd of art lovers and mall goers saw for themselves the artists in action. It was a show within a show, a life-affirming testament to the need for communion between flowers and human beings—and the unexplained exalted feeling and art we like to term here labor as.

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Barrioquinto at West

"MAL (1-Cho T'Inot Mudhluong Dumanyog)" by Andres Barrioquinto

VISUAL ARTS

ANDRES Barrioquinto shows solo experimental use with multimedia, models, experiments and sculptures in "Tagalog Rubric, Tagalog Ano... Bind Mood," which is on view at the West Gallery in UP Diliman till on June 5-12. A recipient of the 1st Thirteen Artists Award in the 2000, Barrioquinto graduated with degrees in painting from the College of Fine Arts of the University of Santo Tomas, and received numerous awards, including the Bronze Award in 1999 and 2000. In 1999, he received honorable mention at the 6th International Biennial Print and Drawing Exhibition in Taiwan; in 1998, he won the 46th Ideal grand prize.

ISABELA del Rosario presents "Tainted Metaphors," a group show in two parts at the Center for Contemporary Art. The first part is ongoing until June 12. Curated by Patricia Chan Dee, the show features the works of Mira Fuentes, Isabelle Javier, Patricia Perez Lustrisimo, Ginger Rumano, and Mariniza. Mixed Opposites, Luna Cabungcal-Lang, Elvie Villareal, Rey Paras-Perez, Ma. Victoria Garcia, Amy Reagan, Alvin Zafra, Yasmin Sison, Jayson Oliveras, Pinkling Maglalang, Gary Yosa Pastrana, Angie Baldon, Rosario Aquilina, Wenson Cheng, Louie Cordero and Brian Sergio.

THE ART Festival 2004 closes today at the Philippines Art Gallery, 20 Calbayan St., White Plains, QC. Participating artists include Rina Cupil, Rosina Valdez, Raquel Medrano, George Duhig, Carol Sevilla, Ricky Dalpatan, Jose Maria Ferrer, Pat Hernandez, Leo Calalang, Edwin Lacierda, Dennis Magbalena, Jun Garcia Mendoza, Jun Gimuela, Gerlie Mesa, Joey Ong, Mon Remaluna and Nonoy Reyes.

THE CHRONICLE Gallery shows solo Julian Arcos' "Sky" on June 1-14 at the Atrium, Megamall B. The exhibit will feature a capsule that 6x60 oil canvas works and at the same time are emulsions of artists impressions.

INDIAN Nuances is the third and last in a series of bamboo influenced sculptures "walk away from the bamboo forest." The exhibit, which will be held on June 3-17 at Gallery 101, Glorietta 3, by Jaya Santos Mahan, displays earthy glazes, stylized Jun-like shapes, jars, bowls and functional items.

BY "A LITTLE Less Conversation," Lehrmann prefers to let his art-making process speak for itself, particularly "the physical engagement with the play of the tactile qualities of oil, where color's lively energy and interest... willingly, dependent on each other."

The show is on view until June 9 at the West Gallery in Diliman's E. Mabini. Above is "LIEWM II."

"UNEXAMINED Selves," by Barrioquinto

GENERATIONS junior painting and Marlene Ching table at Pinoy

"LIGHTNING Divide"

Translating music into image

By Consuelo C. Tejero

WESLEY Valenzuela is proving himself to be one of the most accomplished and intellectually deep artists of his generation.

This could be seen in "Wide Open Sky," his recent exhibit of 24 pieces in mixed media in The Big & Small Art Co. at the Artwalk, 4/L, Bldg. A, SM Megamall, Mandaluyong City. Though it was only his second solo show, it amply demonstrated how this young man could rise above the frivolities of his contemporaries.

The pieces are principally in oil on canvas adorned with enamel paint and pencil sketches, and collaged with computer print-outs and fiberglass or resin reliefs, assuming the look and texture of concrete walls ridden with graffiti and bills. They're invariably red, black, gray and white washes with drippings, streaks and thick splotches of glossy paint.

"Lightning Divide" consists of four canvases, a big panel and three smaller panels with a big black splotch and a few small white ones. It is embellished with small reliefs of a mask and two lionheads painted white and red, then collaged with printouts of faces and Oriental temple reliefs.

"Stream of Consciousness" is a triptych adorned with pencil lines of circles and diagram and printouts of buildings, faces, masks, inscriptions. This is repeated in the diptych "Erasing Clouds."

"Rise Above" is a long vertical canvas washed in gray and streaked with red and black, with a printout of a winged figure that's half-butterfly and half-human. A similar piece is a diptych of the same title.

"Red Series" consists of four pieces predominantly red, with black and white splotches, collage of group pictures, inscriptions.

Then there are the 12 smaller untitled pieces which are virtually duplicates of one another, predominantly gray, with strips of red, photo collage, and partially textured with sand.

The iconography we see in the art of Valenzuela is not necessarily the faces of gods and saints we imagine them to be.

"I'm interested not so much in iconography as in symbols," says the artist. "It doesn't necessarily connote something religious. The eye in the triangle, for example, which usually stands for God, I use to symbolize the voyeuristic in every man."

In this show, particularly, he was inspired not so much by images as by music, and he is actually trying to visualize certain song lyrics here. Thus, the canvas, a tabula rasa, is "chaotically filled with tracts of Jimi Hendrix's guitar squealing, Bob Dylan's poetic storytelling, the splattering reds of Spawn, and musings of teenage kids."

These, he says, were what freed him from his box, opening his eyes to the wide open sky. The show then is about awareness, stages of awakening, a wider vision.

Says the artist: "If you have a wider appreciation of ordinary things, common objects, it will open your mind, and make you explore life more."

A Fine Arts graduate from University of Santo Tomas, Valenzuela looks up to fellow artists Nuno Alvarado, Ronald Ventura, Mexican muralist Diego Rivera, Graffiti artist Jean-Michel Basquiat, Action painter Jackson Pollock.

His art is a fine melding of the figurative and the abstract. "I enjoy the spontaneity of abstraction, but I also continue to be fascinated by the human figure."

"RISE Above"

"ERASING Clouds"

Call it passion, obsession

ALL4ART

Alice Zobel Jr.

WHAT do you read in most newspapers most of the time these days?

I don't know about you, but I always encounter phrases like: "huge debts," "alarming budget deficit," "plunging foreign investment" and "growing joblessness."

It is this last that has always bothered me. This is because I have involved myself in two monumental crusades. The first is to persuade everyone that one of the best ways to understand and therefore to love this country is through the arts. The second is to advocate the idea that the arts (and crafts) produce jobs.

So then, what have my efforts reaped? Well, the sadness of my fellow doers of art is one result.

Another is my being labeled by my critics "Alice Philippines" (not in beauty also, but because of my advocacies)? Again this does not put me off from my crusades but makes me more determined than ever.

As is often the case with these things, one does the best one can. It's true what they say on TV: One must do something, anything!

My case in de-researching some wheezing boyfriend was asked to host a recital in Batangas. He made the terrible mistake of asking me to help choose "crossover" repertoire.

Until now he doesn't know what hit him and passed through his concert like only vaguely remembers a rash of fantastic descending and ascending arpeggios (by composers).

He also remembers his girlfriend being emotionally in a very loud mood. Nothing was delivered on time. And we recorded our best performance ever.

But I got what I wanted. A showcase of some of the best Filipino products (and our dramatically in a resort setting—and to think I did not purchase my dress from outside our window!

THIS is how my father and my family see me—carving the trees and bushes/rubs.

DETAIL of embroidered pillowcases

Renovating a resort results in a whirlwind love affair with Filipino crafts

Hmm, when we were talking about my money constraints, my friend Philip Co Diaphong noted, "What is important is not the point you are trying to prove but the process of proving it."

I think that this resort is convincing the public that craft products are "in" and "hip" instead of "it-nanays" and "passé."

This way more people will be inclined to buy craft. Craft would be promoted as "contemporary" and "cutting-edge." Craft should be interesting with our lives and not just a quaint feature to be tolerated.

Younger people would take greater interest in all of these crafts in larger numbers for craft, meaning that our baskets, bariks, capiz boudoir, pottery, etc. are pulled away from the brink of extinction. With such vigorous sales, we can then proudly proclaim that handicrafts provide jobs!

But, did I enjoy going through that process although I am still recuperating—I had just one month to redo the resort!

'Pinoying' process

Let me share with you my convincing process of "Pinoying" the resort. The main intention here is to honor the many people in the crafts field who have created the products that I have used.

First item on the agenda: the outdoor furniture. Wicker, bamboo, wood, rattan... so much to choose from.

Unfortunately, furniture made from such materials quickly deteriorates when exposed to the elements. However, my brother-in-law, Pablo, told me about some plastic furniture resembling pieces made from natural fibers. They were not only weather-resistant but beautiful as well.

Yes, plastic can be beautiful! I was fascinated by the minute-to-see the chairs! Carlo Cenzo of Tropitek, who has a showroom in the Home Depot at The Fort, and Rachel Hernando, as well as Lucky Monteza of Watts Nickel Co., were my suppliers.

The idea came from Mr. Sharpe in Cebu back in 1997, when he saw that outdoor rattan furniture had to be constantly repaired because of damage from weather. He developed the technology of giving plastic pieces a crafted look.

From two machines and 10 people, his workshop grew to 25 machines and 200 weavers. What is wonderful about this furniture is that despite being synthetic it is pleasing to the eye and to the touch.

More important, it is durable. It is made of Resins, it is washable, has a long life span, and is 100-percent recyclable.

Well done, Mr. Sharpe!

Next came my bedrooms. I wanted to give the resort a homey feeling, so I was determined to have embroidered bedcovers and pillowcases.

Saint of handicrafts

This was not easy. I had met Cleto Hache, who I wrote about in one of my Tool articles. He had told me that 30 bedcovers in three weeks was impossible. Despite my protests of supporting our handicrafts, he wasn't convinced.

In all fairness to Cleto, he subcontracts to various villages and it is difficult to organize these communities.

My hopes dropped like dots of marble on my feet! I walked away with only embroidered pillowcases, napkins and runners now!

However, there is a patron saint for handicrafts. There must be!

The patron saint and the power of media saved me! Not long after this, I received an e-mail from Jeffrey del Valle asking if I had time to do a story on the embroidery in his hometown, Pandacan.

Having received the e-mail from Jeffrey, it did not take me long to jump into the car and dash off.

Jeffrey introduced me to the two remaining embroidery-producing families in Pandacan, once the "embroidery capital of the Philippines."

CAL-01

TRADITIONAL Lucanidad plastic furniture remaining weather